

The Impact of Academic (Institutional) Inbreeding on Language Students' Exposure to Global English Vocabularies and Intelligibility

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of academic inbreeding, on language students' exposure to global English vocabularies and intelligibility in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. Academic inbreeding is the practice of retaining the products of an institution to teach as lecturers in the same institution after graduation. It is hypothesized that this phenomenon may limit language learners' exposure to diverse linguistic perspectives despite any language teaching approach employed by lecturers. The survey method was employed in gathering data from both students and lecturers. Five institutions in South West Nigeria (OAU, Ile Ife, AAU, Akungba, OOU, Ago Iwoye, AFUED, Ondo, and WUSTO, Ondo) were used as case study. The relationship between academic inbreeding and linguistic competence is explored in the study by collecting data through questionnaires to examine the impact of academic inbreeding on students' exposure to global English vocabularies and intelligibility. The findings align with the position of this paper that academic inbreeding negatively affects language students' vocabulary development. Based on the findings, it is recommended that governments provide sufficient financial support to universities to enable lecturers to go on sabbatical leave and teach in other institutions, facilitate lecturers' participation in international exchange programmes as visiting teachers, and equip language laboratories with modern gadgets to facilitate students' access to online lectures from foreign institutions.

Keywords: Academic Inbreeding, Global English Vocabularies, Intelligibility, Language Teaching Approaches, Linguistic Competence.

Background to the study/Introduction

The teaching of English language has gained substantial attention with regard to the fleeting approaches appropriated by language experts in transferring communication knowledge to the students. Arguments around the efficiency of learners and speakers of the language alike continue to get more traction as scholars are at variance as to what specific approach will be effective in teaching the language. Conventionally, different approaches are recognized some of which are the intelligibility-based approach, the schema-based approach, the genre-based approach and others (Levis, 2005). Invariably, the intelligibility-based approach pays significant attention on pronunciation teaching in an understanding that it would enhance effective communication skills. The fact that this approach has recorded remarkable results underscores why it is mostly embraced by intellectuals in their pedagogical involvements. However, its failure to clinically address the complexities of global English vocabularies accounts for its declining values. Conversely, the schema-based approach lays strong emphasis on the accumulated knowledge and prior competence of the users of the language to drive deeper understanding of the topic of interaction (Barlow and Kemmer, 2011). This approach's inability to account for the very dynamic and flexible English vocabularies has been considered as its Achilles hill (Turner, 2013). Meanwhile the genre-based approach has been lauded for its ability to transform learners experience by teaching language through the explicit analysis of text genres and structures (Swales, 1990). Strangely however, its major shortcoming is that it falls short of teaching the nuances of English vocabularies as we know it today. The Intelligibility-Based Approach, for instance places a premium on pronunciation teaching and focuses on aspects that

significantly impact communication (Levis, 2005). However, this approach does not fully address the complexities of global English vocabularies and varieties. The Schema-Based Approach, which emphasizes the role of prior knowledge and schemata in language comprehension, also falls short in adequately addressing the dynamic nature of global English vocabularies. Similarly, the Genre-Based Approach, which focuses on teaching language through explicit analysis of text genres and structures (Swales, 1990), does not account for teaching nuances of global English vocabularies. While these approaches and other language teaching methods are valuable, academic inbreeding creates gaps in language learners' competence, highlighting the need for adequate provisions to address these gaps.

This research is considered timely in response to the ongoing downtrend in the employment of English vocabularies to express one's concerns. It is discovered that public relations officers in different organizations, including higher institutions are not well-versed in the employment of diverse English words in the context of their communication. Sadly, many human resources managers have failed monumentally in this regard too. It is their stock-in-trade to employ the same set of words for potential employees or even communicate amongst them after employment so much that all employees who are familiar with them can accurately predict the next words they would use to express themselves in conversation situations. The tragedy is multiplied by the involvement of secondary school language teachers in this malady. An important majority of teachers in their tier of knowledge are abysmally limited in the English language vocabularies that they have in their reservoir. We have thus linked this problem to academic inbreeding and for that, we have hypothesized that the phenomenon holds a great potential to limit learners' exposure to diverse linguistic perspectives.

In this research study, a survey method and mixed-method approach was used to gather data from both students and lecturers, who are randomly selected in Nigeria universities namely, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Akungba Akoko University, Akungba, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo, and Westley University, Ondo. As stated by Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017)

that analysis should aim for complementarity, where the strengths of one method compensate for the weaknesses of the other, quantitative analysis provides generalizability while qualitative analysis provides depth and content. We limited our focus on these institutions around the area of abode for the sake of convenience. These institutions, it should be mentioned, are expressly not in the practice of academic inbreeding as their recruitment culture. However, they prioritize the employment of graduates who are produced from the same school. What does this therefore mean for the transfer of linguistic competence and knowledge for students? Put alternatively, how does the institution that practices academic inbreeding escape the malady of raising or training students who become grossly deficient in the employment of various English vocabularies to express themselves?

This problem remains in part because the fact that ex-students who have not been exposed to diverse academic engagements in the linguistic profession are indiscriminately employed, has continued to overshadow the possibility of students being appropriately trained. From the responses by the students and lecturers, it appears that the precarious condition of putting priority on the employment of students who graduated from a school, back into the same system, is caused by a number of factors that would be looked into in this unraveling. Across every department, regardless of the discipline, to be versed in English vocabularies and expressions is hinged on how well the individual is exposed to numerous words.

Literature Review

One of the most important language teaching approaches is behavioral approach. Scholars have defined the approach as the process whereby the teacher employs their language as the instrument of influencing the behavior of learners in a teaching-learning context (Carr, 1985; Chomsky, 1959). What this suggests is that the repertoire of speakers' linguistic resources is often shaped by external factors that rely on their own language competence to determine the linguistic behavior of the others. In the context of language learning and the global vocabulary building of students, it is particularly impossible for an inbred language teacher to rely on an expanse of linguistic resources because they are limited in that.

Martens *et al.* consolidate this definition when they argue that a language behavior is determined by a number of factors chief of which is the child linguistic environment, and for a second language speaker (SL2) to be well grounded in global English vocabularies, a native or near-native expert must be involved in the process or reshaping their linguistic behavior (Martens *et al.*, 2011).

Interestingly, several other approaches have been proposed including the audio-lingual approach which is said to 'imp-part the learner the ability to understand and speak a foreign language' (Valdman, 1970), communicative-based approach which emphasizes performance-based language learning by promoting the development of real-life language skills through the conscious engagement of learners in contextualized and communicative-oriented learning tasks (Mason and Payant, 2019), and the process-based approach which is considered as the approach that involves planning, monitoring, observing and then evaluating the output of the learners (Richards, 2016). All these have significant impact when applied to facilitate the increased knowledge of global vocabularies of English for students in an ESL environment.

Much as all the highlighted approaches above have their strengths and weaknesses, one factor that magnifies their inefficiency in teaching the English vocabularies is academic inbreeding. Defined as a recruitment practice that exclusively incorporates graduates of a particular institution into the same school for teaching (Aboderin, 2015), academic inbreeding has become a cankerworm to the impartation of solid academic culture into the students. All across globe where best practices are embraced, the teaching of English language requires a broad spectrum of knowledge acquired by the teachers, who have gained substantial confidence through their interactions with speakers and users of the language that come from varying cultural backgrounds.

To understand the severe implications of academic inbreeding especially on language and language study, the researchers harvested responses from both students and lecturers in the selected universities, and it is gathered that their knowledge of some global English vocabularies is very concerning. It is discovered that many students do not relish the idea of using diverse linguistic tools to express

themselves, whether in communication or formal engagements. This is particularly underscored by the limitation of words in their repertoire. Many of them words and expressions that have been over-flogged by usage, and this indicates that they do not have adequate words in their linguistic reservoirs to convey their thoughts.

By default, the human brain is meant to attract words as much as they are employed in their sociological and pedagogical encounters. In an educational environment where academic inbreeding is prevalent, the possibility of being exposed to multiple cultures is hampered, often because the available linguistic expressions in their environment is limited. Inbred academics are often limited in their language competence as a result of the limitations of their teacher's exposure. They are the category of teachers whose only source of knowledge is their own teachers, and they are also not provided with the opportunity to learn under different academics. Being limited to the same group of teachers inadvertently means that they can only stock their vocabulary reservoir with the same set of words, usual expressions and stale coinages that are incapable of expressing the dynamism of the English language today.

Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to explore how academic inbreeding affects students' exposure to diverse English vocabulary and their intelligibility in global contexts. According to Pearce, L. D., & Hardie, J. H. (2024), mixed-methods is about designing research so qualitative and quantitative inform and enhance each other throughout the research process, including the analysis phase. In Mertens, D. M. (2023)'s emphasis, design possibilities across diverse contexts and disciplines allow researchers to integrate different kinds of data and methods to answer complex research questions. He says the approach is flexible, adaptive, and responsive to the research problem rather than committed to a single type of method. Undergraduates and lecturers in language departments at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Akungba Akoko University, Akungba, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo, and Westley University, Ondo were the

sampled population for the research. The research size is 100 language students, 50 from inbred institutions and 50 from diverse ones, and 20 lecturers from each of the sampled institutions. Instrument for data collection was questionnaire through google form for both the lecturers and the students and semi-structured interviews with lecturers to explore their educational background, attitudes toward English varieties and curriculum design influence. The qualitative data analysis is done using descriptive statistics and t-tests/ANOVA to compare groups while quantitative data analysis is done through thematic analysis, identifying recurring patterns related to inbreeding and language exposure.

Data Analysis

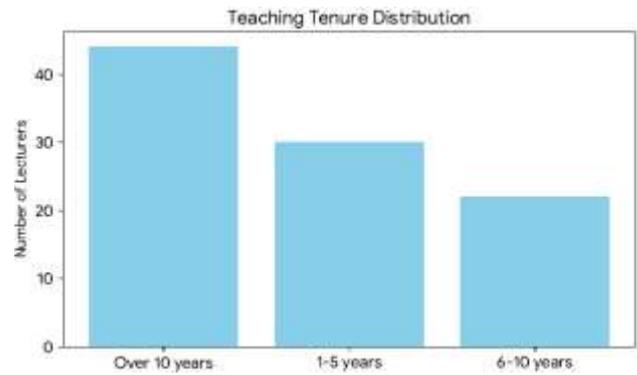
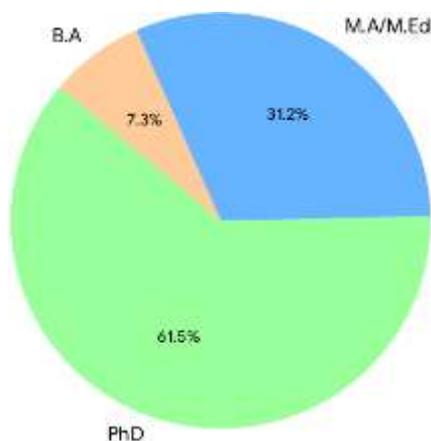
Analysis of Lecturers Responses

The Focus of this analysis is ‘Academic (institutional) inbreeding and its effect on Exposure to global English vocabularies, Students’ intelligibility, Teaching practices and professional development. Data was gathered from both language Lecturers of five (5) higher institutions and Students.

The proposed Lecturer respondents were one hundred (100). Meanwhile, there were ninety-six (96) valid responses for most questions. The respondents were language lecturers. The analysed sub-topic were four (4), that is, academic inbreeding profile, exposure to global varieties of English, perceived impact of academic inbreeding and professional development support.

1. Demographics and Background

This report analyzes survey responses from 96 lecturers regarding institutional practices.

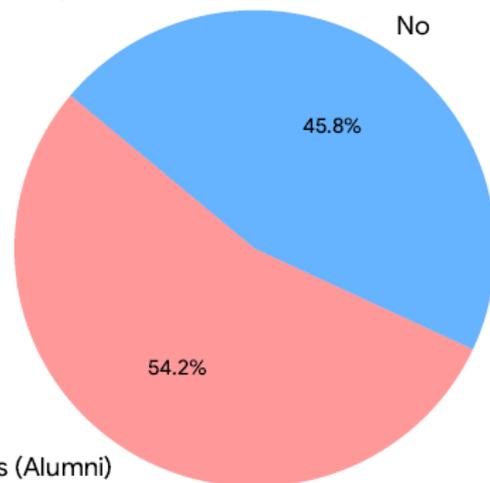


2. Institutional Breakdown

The 100 participants were distributed equally (20 per institution):

- Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo
- Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife
- Akungba Akoko University, Akungba
- Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye
- Wesley University, Ondo

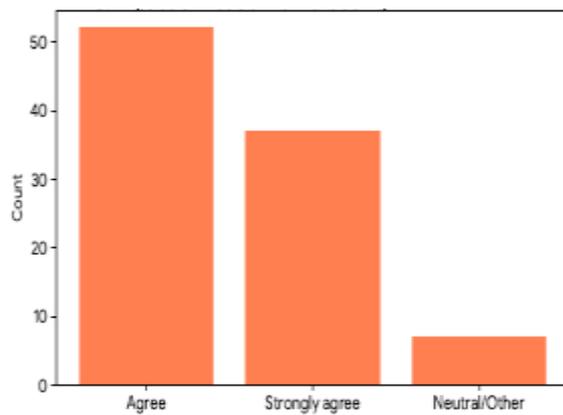
Are the Lecturers Alumni of the Same Institution?



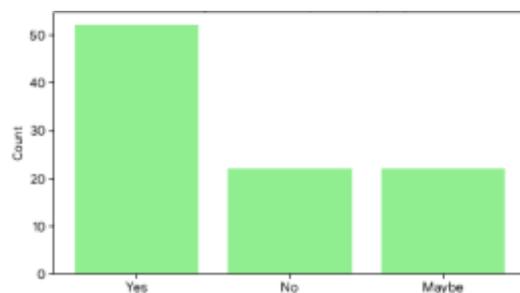
3. Impact of Academic Inbreeding

Lecturers rated the impact of academic inbreeding on student exposure to global English.

Perception: Does Inbreeding Affect Student Exposure?



Would Hiring Outsiders Help Diversify Exposure?



1. Academic Inbreeding Profile

54.2% of respondents indicated that they are alumni of the same institution where they teach. Many have taught in the institution for several years, suggesting low staff mobility.

Interpretation:

This supports the presence of academic inbreeding, where institutions repeatedly hire their own graduates, limiting external academic influence.

2. Exposure to Global Varieties of English

The key trends from responses here is that many lecturers do integrate global varieties of English (British, American, and so o), but updates to vocabulary resources are not frequent. Also, exposure is often limited or inconsistent.

Implication:

While awareness exists, systematic exposure to global English vocabularies is weak, possibly due to familiarity with only local academic traditions and limited professional development opportunities

3. Perceived Impact of Academic Inbreeding

85.2% agreed that academic inbreeding affects students’ exposure to global English, limits linguistic diversity. Most respondents believe that hiring lecturers from other institutions would improve students’ intelligibility and broaden teaching approaches.

Key Insight:

Lecturers themselves acknowledge the negative linguistic consequences of institutional inbreeding.

4. Professional Development Support

Responses show that seventy-eight (78) respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that their institution provides sufficient support. In view of this, requested supports include; Regular workshops (phonetics, phonology, global Englishes), provision of Language laboratories and financial support for conferences and training.

Interpretation:

Lack of institutional support may reinforce the effects of academic inbreeding, as lecturers have limited exposure to new linguistic trends.

General Overview of the Study

The data were collected from language lecturers to examine how academic (institutional) inbreeding influences students’ exposure to global English vocabularies, students’ intelligibility in English, teaching practices and professional development. Meanwhile, the responses were measured mainly using Likert-scale items, making the data suitable for descriptive analysis. Also, the following aspects were duly considered in the analysis

a. Evidence of Academic (Institutional) Inbreeding

Analysis of respondents’ background shows that a large proportion of lecturers are graduates of the same institution where they currently teach and many respondents have spent several years teaching in the same institution.

Interpretation

This indicates a high level of academic inbreeding, as staff recruitment is largely internal. According to academic mobility

theory, such practices often limit intellectual diversity and innovation.

b. Impact on Exposure to Global English Vocabularies

Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that academic inbreeding affects students' exposure to global English vocabularies and they reported limited integration of international English varieties such as American, British, and other World Englishes.

Interpretation

The dominance of internally trained lecturers may restrict exposure to diverse lexical choices, contemporary global English usage and it supports the view that academic inbreeding leads to linguistic uniformity rather than diversity.

c. Effect on Students' Intelligibility

Responses indicate that a majority of respondents believe academic inbreeding has a negative influence on students' intelligibility and students are less exposed to varied pronunciation patterns and communicative strategies.

Interpretation

Limited exposure to global English varieties may reduce students' ability to communicate effectively with international speakers, adapt to different accents and vocabularies and this aligns with World Englishes theory, which emphasizes intelligibility across diverse English-speaking contexts.

d. Institutional Support and Professional Development

The analysis further reveals that most respondents disagreed that their institutions provide adequate professional development. There is limited access to workshops, conferences and modern language laboratories.

Interpretation

Insufficient professional development reinforces the effects of academic inbreeding, as lecturers have fewer opportunities to update their linguistic and pedagogical skills.

e. Perception of External Recruitment

A strong majority of respondents supported the recruitment of lecturers from other institutions, believed this would enhance

teaching quality, linguistic diversity and students' intelligibility

Interpretation

This suggests awareness among lecturers themselves that academic diversity is crucial for effective language education.

Analysis of Students Responses

The focus of this analysis is 'Academic (institutional) inbreeding and its effect on exposure to global English vocabularies, Students' intelligibility, teaching practices and professional development. Data were gathered from both language Lecturers of five (5) higher institutions and students.

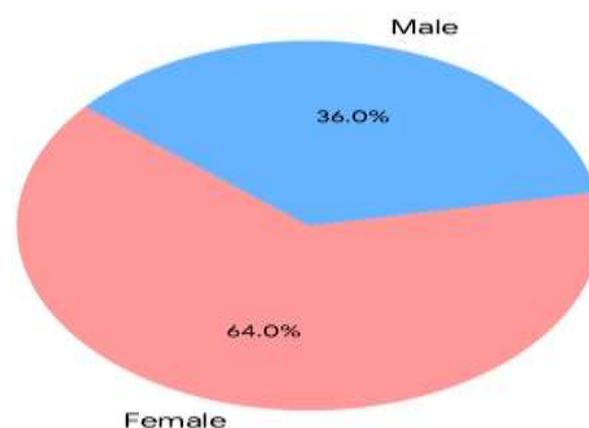
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1. Demographics Overview

This study analyzed a total of 100 participants across five institutions

- Total Sample Size: 100 students
- Gender: 64 Female (63.6%) and 36 Male (36.4%)
- Level of Study: Primarily 400 Level students

Gender Distribution (N=100)



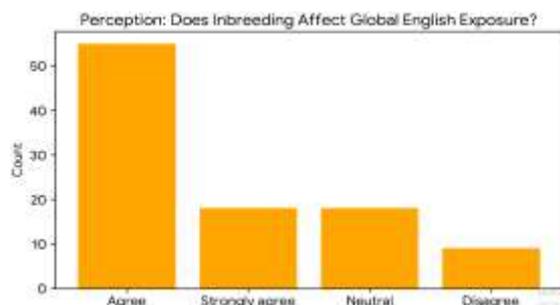
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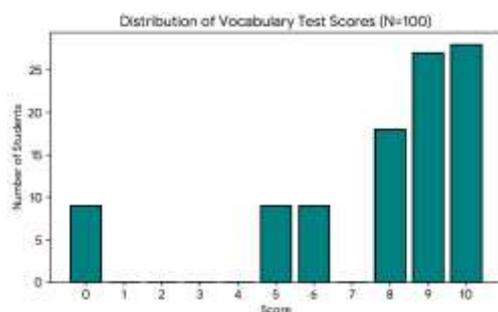
3. Perception of Academic Inbreeding

Students were asked if institutional inbreeding affects exposure to global English.



4. Vocabulary & Intelligibility Performance Results from the 10-point vocabulary test

- Mean Score: 7.64 | Median Score: 9.0 | StdDev: 3.01
- Students excelled in digital terms (e.g., Social Media, Viral Content)
- Gaps were identified in nuanced terms (e.g., Upcycling, Glamping)



Summary of Key Findings

The analyses of both the students and lecturers show the following:

1. academic inbreeding is prevalent among language lecturers.
2. it negatively affects students' exposure to global English vocabularies.
3. it limits students' intelligibility in international communication.
4. lack of professional development for inbred lecturers worsens the situation.
5. external recruitment is seen as a viable solution.

Research Implication

The findings imply that institutions should:

- i. reduce over-reliance on internal recruitment
- ii. encourage academic mobility
- iii. invest in professional development

programmes

The overall pattern and theoretical link of this analysis show that the data gathered from the lecturers align well with theories that argue academic inbreeding, encourages pedagogical stagnation, reduces lexical and phonological diversity, and limits students' global intelligibility in English which strongly supports the study's central argument.

It is gathered that academic inbreeding is necessitated by a number of factors, which would be unmasked presently. One, academics in the recent time do not enjoy the normal incentives that make them seek teaching opportunities in other institutions. Meanwhile, such occurrence is entirely strange to the Nigerian academic environment around the 1970s and even 1980s where academics could move either vertically or horizontally to impact knowledge elsewhere. The practice allowed for students to be educated under an English language expert who has different sets of words in their repertoire, and could widen their skills. The sudden effacement of that culture and practice therefore contributes to the dwindling capacity of teachers to express themselves in a diverse manner because they do not have the right vocabularies in their linguistic arsenal. 87.5 per cent of the gathered data indicates that academic inbreeding has negative consequences. The questionnaire is attached in the appendix of this study.

The underlying problem is that students become improperly trained and for that reason, their ability to express themselves or even compete with their contemporaries in the global knowledge economy has been hampered. Academic immobility therefore comes as one of the detrimental problems of academic inbreeding in a way because it discourages movement of lectures across universities to train students and expose them to different language tools. In the absence of that, the students would be trained by teachers who do not have many vocabularies in their repertoire and they would also be incorporated into the system to continue the same.

Words such as op-ed, meme, zoom, and gig economy, are the more recent inventions in the English language, and that are thus inducted as useful vocabularies to express certain situations. Sadly however, many of the students in the survey have not encountered the terms and were grossly incapable of

making use of them in conversation situations. In the interim, this reflects a wide gap between them and the English users of the current time, while at the deeper level, it indicates that they are only reacting to the pervasive culture of academic inbreeding that has arrested the entire intellectual environment.

Sadly too, there has been a progressive decline in the reinforcement of the language laboratories in the Nigerian universities today. The language laboratory is known to be a place where latest English vocabularies can be introduced to the students. More importantly, it affords students the opportunity to be virtually present in academic engagements that are organized across various places where the varieties of English are taught. The Australian version of English language, the Canadian version, the American type and the British English are all variants of the language that improve the proficiency of the users of the language in some ways. Meanwhile the opportunity that the digital technologies bring to us as academics have not been appropriately explored.

If anything, students can be there in the language laboratory of AkungbaAkoko University, or AFUED, and be undertaking lectures in English vocabularies with their colleague in the USA, United Kingdom, Australia, among other places without losing any message. The researchers are struck to discover that not many universities in Nigeria have language laboratories which strengthen the argument that absence of adequate funding is one factor that encourages academic inbreeding. It is just barely impossible that anyone will be well-grounded in the English vocabularies of the contemporary time without being exposed to the societies of user or speakers of the language who have varieties of vocabularies to describe their ideas, express their thoughts, and in some ways, relay their concerns

Conclusion and Recommendations

Data indicates that 73% of students believe academic inbreeding limits exposure to global English. While digital literacy is high, the high variance (SD 3.01) suggests inconsistent acquisition of nuanced vocabulary. It is therefore generally recommended that the government provide adequate funding for academics to embark on international conferences and workshops where they would

extract ideas from others and improve their own English vocabularies. Having got the response from lecturers that majority of them have continually faced the problem of not attending conference beyond their academic walls, we now realize that the opportunity to improve inbred academics is hampered.

Attending conferences and workshops would position lecturers to update their knowledge skills as they would experience great conversations that would spark their motivation to learn more. Generally, people feel reluctant to improve themselves if they are in an academic surrounding where they are not challenged intellectually. In fact, the most informed of them can lose their steam to the struggle when they realize that they do not get better conversations that would spark them to learn more. If the government provides the necessary funding for academic conferences and workshops, these intellectuals would have the opportunity to improve their English vocabularies in a tremendous way.

In the same vein, it is important that the government raises funds in collaboration with necessary funding outlets and philanthropists to produce more language laboratories in our universities. The English department is one that requires such upgrades. They need language laboratories for practicing on what they have already known, and also use that as avenue to connect with their colleagues across the world so that they can share new ideas, English vocabularies with them. The sponsors of the Nigerian educational system must therefore place equal attention to English laboratories as they have often accorded to science laboratories, for the opportunity to raise vibrant minds in the profession of language depends exclusively on how well they are invested in. In essence, it is crucially important that language laboratories get the right funding so that there can be in place the right mechanisms to raise proficient users of the English language.

Key Suggestions and Recommendations

- Local Dialect Integration: Recommended for subject assimilation.
- Practical Exposure: Increase varieties of global English usage.
- Exchange Programs: Implement student and lecturer exchange initiatives.

- Language Laboratories: Integrate labs into English Language teaching.
- Digital Literacy: Encourage AI usage and global news (CNN/BBC).
 - Faculty Development: Professional workshops and presentation training.
- Self-Practice: Encourage students to practice independently.
- Global Alignment: Lecturers should stay abreast of dynamic global practices.
- Competitive Learning: Organize contests and quizzes with other communities.
- Literary Diversity: Exposure via global literature texts.
- Faculty Diversification: Hire from diverse academic backgrounds.
- Curriculum Expansion: Include modern lifestyle and specialized vocabulary.
- Collaboration: Facilitate exchange programs between the five institutions.

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