ACADEMIC DISTANCING ON ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS APPROACH

Anana Mariam

Abstract

Academic distancing has paralyzed academic activities in Nigerian universities since the closure of universities in March 2020 as a measure to curtail the spread of Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. Many Federal and State universities that hitherto experienced partial academic distancing due to strike called by Academic Staff Union of Universities, insufficient educational infrastructures, facilities and resources now undergo total academic distancing. Also, private universities that had been experiencing semi-partial distancing now experience partial distancing because some of them still teach and learn through online lecturing, learning; and attend meetings, conferences and symposia through zoom and webinar. This study investigates the academic gaps created through partial and total academic distancing in Nigerian universities with a view to identifying ways of bridging these gaps. This is a qualitative-descriptive design that adopts Interactional Sociolinguistics as its theoretical framework. Data were gathered from various audio interactions, telephone conversations and messages sent to the researcher's Whatsapp platforms. The researcher applied a random sampling technique to select data and later pruned them before analysing them. One of the findings is that metaphorical code switching results in meta-messages thereby leading to ambiguous contexts and interpretations; thereby widening the academic gaps among discourse participants. The research therefore recommends that academics and other members of the university community should collaborate to ensure that these gaps are filled by minimizing the use of ambiguous expressive information. Also, functional and structural contextualization frames and cues should be appropriately applied to ensure that all utterances are understood so as to bridge or minimise academic gaps in Nigerian universities.

Keywords: Learning, Academic distancing, meta-messages, Discourse analysis, Utterances

Introduction

The concept of distancing stems from the work of a developmental psychologist, Heiriz Werner and Bernard Kaplan. It focuses on the psychologists' ability to assist people to establish their individuality through their knowledge of separateness from everything around them (Henriz and Kaplan, 1963). Besides this, Henriz and Kaplan investigate distancing as it relates to language development and observe that its focal point is on the "increase in qualitative dissimilarity between the referenced object and the vehicle" .and that as the distance between these linguistics concepts grows, children's speaking levels gradually develop from infantile language stage to a level where they apply Standard English. In addition,

distancing language is said to be a psychological situation whereby a person separates or distances his or her ideas, discussions, groups, statement and viewpoints from others for the purposes of isolating or disengaging himself/herself from others. The use of the first-person pronoun: "me, I,mine, we, ours" and other self-identifying expressions are said to be the indices of language distancing.

Although, this concept is said to remain problematic according to Hinskens (1988) as cited in Li Wei (2011), it became very common and prominent due to the arrival of Covid-19 pandemic, "a constructive disruptor, (Bajhan and Goyal, 2020) in the world 2019 and in Nigeria in 2020. In this context, distancing is related to the physical space that individuals should create between themselves, hence social distancing or physical distancing (Cross, 2020). The purpose of this physical space is to flatten the spread of this deadly virus called Covid-19 pandemic (Centre for Disease Control (CDC, 2020), World Health Organisation (WHO, 2020). Individual, organizations, local, state and Federal government in Nigeria continuously sensitise every citizen to stay safe by keeping social distancing through hand sanitisers, wearing of mass, keeping a distance of 6 feet from people outside one's household, self-isolation and quarantine,(WHO, 2020).

Besides social distancing, which seems to have only positive outcomes, other distancing such as personal, language , linguistics (which may be social or temporal, Nook 2011), distancing language, business , public , interpersonal, interpersonal, psychological, physiological , mental and emotional, political, religious and academic distancing seem to have both positive and negative results depending on the context of use. They are predominantly noises, breaks and confusions borne out of various interactions from different fields of human endeavours. This study focuses only on academic distancing in Nigerian universities during Covid-19 pandemic especially from March, 2020 when the Federal Government of Nigerian ordered the closure of schools in Nigeria(Ladipo and Adebori , 2020, Ettang , 2020).

Academic distancing has negatively affected academic activities in Nigerian universities. Students' intrapersonal and interpersonal endowments are at risk with academic distancing. Gossenheimer et al (2017) point out that with this kind of distancing, students may not be able to develop the socialization and interpersonal skills that normally accompany traditional learning methods. Academic distancing is expressed through total and partial lockdown of academic activities; total distancing in Federal and State universities and partial lockdown in private universities. Private universities experienced a partial lockdown because

they shifted to online education in consonance with Neil (2020)'s observation that the pandemic has resulted to a rapid shift to online education. Even the virtual meetings have their setbacks as Nigeria is not yet technologically advanced Oye et al. (2011) as cited in Anene et al. (2014) state that "e-learning in Nigeria has not developed" (1) and many educated people cannot even make use of some of these computer devices because of lack of skills, knowledge and money.

Academic distancing has also caused a breach in communication among members of the university community. Insufficient infrastructures, facilities, resources, technology and the like are also major causes of academic distancing. It has equally caused miscommunication within the university community, misunderstanding between the governments and academic and non-academic staff unions of Nigerian universities. Intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships are equally affected negatively as a result of educational distancing. With academic distancing, scholarly activities in Nigerian universities may not be as they were even after Covid-19 pandemic because of the unprecedented gaps opened by this distancing during covid-19 pandemic.

Academic distancing therefore, are various lockdowns, masking, setbacks, break away, breaks, disengagements, inactivity and negative outcomes that affect academic activities especially due to the closure of Nigerian universities by the Federal Government in order to flatten the spread of Covid-19 pandemic. All the activities within and outside the universities have been affected negatively by Covid-19 pandemic. Some members of the university communities do not meet at all as they did before the lockdown because of the mandatory social distancing to minimize the spread of the pandemic. Some have not met at all and some will never meet because they have died through covid-19 or because they have been laid off of their jobs.

This study therefore investigates academic distancing on academic activities using one of the functional approaches of Discourse Analysis as its analytical tool. It is impossible to apply all aspects of this functional approach to a single work of this nature, therefore selected aspect of Gumperz (1982)'s Interactional Sociolinguistics is suitable and is adopted for this work. The researcher is optimistic that the resources from this paper will be of immense benefits to members of the university communities, the government and other educational stakeholders to enable them bridge the gaps in order to have academic environments and atmospheres that allow effective teaching and learning and other

academic life to strife successfully.

The Concepts of Discourse and Discourse Analysis (DA)

Discourse is polymorphous, it includes talks, actions, narrations, descriptions, arguments, expositions, interactions and conversations either in spoken or written form. It can be political, scholastic, corporate, social, religious, etc. in nature. Anderson and Holloway (2018) explain that discourse includes "talk, text, action, narratives, sets of beliefs" and the way we see the world. Traynor (2005) maintains that it is a rigorous method used in analysing talk and text. It is said to offer ways of investigating meanings whether in conversation or in patterns of signification and representation, Wetheral et al (2001) as cited in Traynor (2006). Onadeko (2000) maintains that it is a naturally occurring conversation with at least two people in social context. Osoba and Sobola (2014) aver that it is not sufficient to say that discourse is the combination of sentences but that it must occur in a particular context.

Context is very crucial in discourse; spoken and written discourse are analysed in social context. Daramola (2005) observes that context is indispensable in discourse's interpretation and understanding. Goffman (1983) as cited in Schifrin (1994) avers that all utterances are situated within contexts such as occasion, situation and encounters. Ayangwa (2014) states that hearers are expected to first consider intended meaning of an expression in context if they aspire to grasp the said intended meaning of expression. Schiffrin (1994) opines that it is the world with people producing utterances. Osoba and Sobola (2014) state that "context is the social environment in which a text occurs(209). Also, Hanks (1995) as cited in Karimnia (2009) avers that context is "everything and nothing" (140). In his theory of context, Van Dijk (1997) as cited in Karimnia (2009) observes that context includes individual's intentions, goals, knowledge,He also opines that contexts are social, psychological, sociological, anthropological and political. Discourse Analysis is one of the broad methods and theories applied in analyzing or studying text and context of discourse.

DA is very complex, ambiguous and divergent. It comprises many approaches, such as the Ethnography of Communication, Pragmatics, the Speech Act Theory, Conversational Analysis, Interactional Sociolinguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis Mediated Stylistics, Tagmemics, Text Linguistics, Variation Analysis and Response Based Therapy. Drid (2010) opines that DA is a diverse area of research used for linguistic analysis of speech by studying language structure and

functions and that it is interdisciplinary and its applications domiciled in various fields. Baxter (2010)notes that it originates from Sociology. Beyond sociology, Alsorihi (2019) avers that DA springs from different disciplines; Alsorihi (2019) avers that DA springs from different disciplinessuch as Sociology, Linguistics and Anthropology. Sucia (2018) observes that DA is a crucible that provides a heterogeneous epistemological framework for the investigation of discourse because recent tendencies converge such as the philosophy of language, the Theory of Enunciation, Symbolic Interactionalism, Ethnomethodology, etc. are interwoven with it.

DA deals with the study of language form as well as the purposes of language. In other words, it is an examination of language structures and functions. Schifrin (2006) as cited in Drid (2010) observes that in defining DA one tackles two divergent approaches, "the formal approach and the functional approach. Chambers (2007) as cited in Alsoriahi (2019) affirms that DA is a genuine approach for studying both written and spoken language. McCarthy (1991) as cited in Drid (2010) avers that DA is language above the sentence while Hai (2004) opines that it is the analysis of language beyond the sentence. Rashidi and Rafieerad (2010) take a broader assessment by observing that it is the examination of language use by members of a speech community.

The major features of DA are expressed through the principles of variability, constructed and constructive language, interpretative repertoire and a combination of micro and macro analytical approaches.   The principles of variability entail that language is used for different purposes and for various consequences. One of such purposes is exhibited in the academic distancing experienced during covid-19 pandemic in Nigerian universities and the various consequences emanated through this distancing.   The approach to DA that is adopted in this work is Gumperz (1982)'s Interactional Sociolinguistics.

Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS)

Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) is a broad functional approach that shares certain features with other disciplines such as Conversation Analysis, Ethnomethodology, Linguistics, Pragmatics, Linguistic Anthropology, Sociology , Ethnography of Communication and Dialectology (https://www/qualityreserah). It deals with language, context and interaction (Gumperz 1982) IS is said to have been founded by a Linguistic Anthropologist, John Gumperz. (Schifrin 1994). It is said to have originated from three disciplines, Sociology, Anthropology and Linguistics

(Schifrin 1994). It is a vast approach that deals with how people share grammatical knowledge and differently contextualized what is being said. It concentrates on social and linguistics meanings created during interactions. It also focuses on how talk and culture come to create meanings. Schifrin (1994) observes that IS as a "social interaction in which emergent construction and negotiation of meaning" (134) are accrued by language use.

Gumperz (1982) believes that talk cannot completely convey absolute meaning, so the background knowledge of the interlocutors is needed to address the incompleteness of words. Language users therefore rely on extracommunicative knowledge to have sufficient meanings of talk in interaction. Words are said to have indexical meanings,(i.e. meanings needed to interpret talk). IS equally deals with how people identify conversation, identity and investigate conversation to point out how contextualization works in the production and reception of talk. Gumperz (1982) believes that contextualization cues and inferential patterns are acquired through a very long intensive face-to-face interaction in a particular cultural setting.

The aspects of IS that are applicable to this study are Gumperz' s contextualization cues (i.e. indicators, signals, verbal and non-verbal hints); verbal features such as volume, accent, intonation, code-switching, sequencing choices, styles-shift formulaic expression; nonlocal features such as gestures, gaze, posture, mimicry.(Gumperz (1982) as cited in Schifrin (1994) ; participants framework/ alignment or role alignment (Goebel, 2017); discourse markers and interjections and contextual presuppositions.

Academic Distancing

There is paucity of materials on academic distancing; however, the researcher has tried to give an operational definition of this concept to fit into this study. Academic distancing means the breaks, disconnections, isolation, separation or the vacuums created as a result of academic lockdown and masking. Universities in Nigeria experienced partial and total distancing due to the complete and partial masking of academic activities during covid-19 pandemic. This distancing has sub-categories such as intra or monologue distancing, this is a psychological distancing; interpersonal distancing, activity-related distancing, teaching-related distancing, physical, logical, mental, emotional, unresponsive, etc distancing. This study focuses on interpersonal distancing based on teaching and learning, test, zoom meetings and examination issues.

The impact of academic distancing cuts across all facets of academic life;

there was no complete interpersonal relationship among members of staff in the universities during covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria, online teaching and learning, conferences, symposiums and meetings took over the physical interpersonal relationship. These new developments created deep gaps in Nigerian universities. This affirms Hora's (2020) observation on Covid-19, that it exacerbates existing problems and that many are unable to continue carrying out their previous works because it is not a normal time to do work.

Academic Activities

Academic activities in Nigerian universities are numerous; these are internal and external activities in the universities. Some of these are the teaching and learning, research and community developments, athletics, careers, association's sonorities and fraternities, arts clubs and other social activities. They are the mainstream of academic life; without which universities cannot run smoothly. This research focuses marred online interactions, telephone conversations and messages gathered during Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data were selected from audio interactions, telephone conversation and messages sent to the researcher's educational platforms. Excerpts of these interactions and messages are analysed using selected aspects of Gumperz' IS. Selection of data was done based on simple randomization. The data are grouped according to their contextualization frames, hence, exchange and interchange respectively, (exchange when conversation involves more than two interlocutors and interchange when only two interactants are involved especially in telephone conversation); all indicating different contextualization frames.

Interexchange A

Miriam (a): Good morning Prof.
Prof (b): Yes, Good morning Miriam
Miriam (c): Yes Prof I want to say that my article is not included in the Journal
Prof (d): Hello, Miram, Miram, Miram can you hear me, Miriam
Miriam (e): Prof, I can hear you, Prof, I can hear you
Prof (f) Miriam, can you hear me, can you hear me
Miriam(g): Yes speak up Prof, I can hear you

Prof: (h) Miriam, Miriam, can you hear me
Miriam (i): Oh, network problem

The schema in Interchange A is an academic discourse orchestrated by the contextualization frame on interpersonal discussion. The interlocutors belong to different cultural background but the same academic environment. Appyling a contextualization preposition, one can deduct from Prof's timeless identification of Miriam's intonation that there has been a prolonged prior face -to -face interactions between Prof and Miriam. This affirms Gumperz's observation that contextualisation cues are learned through long periods of close face-to-face contact. Miriam's expressive information in (c), necessitated another contextual presupposition that the interlocutors are deliberating on an issue that is not strange to them because their utterances are based on a communicative knowledge of their past events.

The communicative intention of Prof's utterance in (d) is that of a strong desire possibly borne out of her extracommunicative knowledge that she has of people. This enables her to understand her interactants and ensure that people (she communicates with) benefit maximally from her footings. Again, this alignment further confirms her communicative intention. The application of this alignment therefore, (by Prof.) indicates her contextual preposition that Miriam might have something crucial to discuss and that she should persist to find solution to it. Miriam understands Prof's expressive intention and quickly utters (i) with an assumption that Prof. may likely hear from her ends. Here, network interference occasioned the non realisation of the communicative intentions of the interactants.

Interchange B
Oloko (a): Hello, how you de
Ana (b): Everything no dey okay ooo
Oloko (c): Dis Covid-19 he get as it be ooo
Ana (d): e no de easy ooo
Oloko (e): Una still de teach for una school
Ana(f): Yes ooo online teaching, it is not easy
Oloko (g); We too are also teaching, but for postgraduate students and supervision of our final year students project.
Ana (h): we also supervise final year students
Oloko (i): Dem they pay you so?

Ana (j): No, na palliative dem they give ooo
Oloko (k): How about payment?
Ana (l): Na half payment they give us, now they want to slice it to ¾
Oloko (m): ha, ha, ¾ salary?
Oloko (n): You know, that is a private university,
Oloko(o): Dem still dey pay us full salary
Ana (p): Oga, find something for me ooo

The contextualization frames are online lecturing, payment of salary and compensation or palliative. Here, Oloko shares the same metamessage with Ana and as such the preceding utterances follow smoothly. The speakers also belong to the same social and academic backgrounds and are very versatile with the negative trend of things caused by Covid-19 pandemic. Oloko's "dis Covid-19 he get as it beoo" indicates his contextual presupposition about the negative impacts of Covid-19 pandemic. The interchange is replete with a situational code-switching. Metaphorical code-switching is also used successfully by the interlocutors to manage three footings successfully. The situational level is expressed at (a), (b) (c),(d) (e), (i) (j), (o) and (p). Standard English is code-switched intermittently and successful to achieve the goals of the speakers. Meta-messages and interpretations can be generated from all the conversational code-switching and the problem of interpreting them to fit their various contexts can as well arise; some of such as indicated in the next analysis.

Ana's "na half of the payment they give us, now they want to slice it to ¾" provokes Oloko's reaction in (f) , an exclamation that indicates a disapproval or a disappointment on Ana's employer. This also precedes his next utterance (n) with its possible contextual presupposition: a reminder to Ana to consider the type of university she teaches. Oloko's expressive information also informs a contextual presupposition that private universities do not pay well and that they can pay peanuts as salary. His next utterance, "Dem, still dey pay us full salary" enables the interlocutors to infer that Oloko does not teach in a private university and that the public university he teaches pays him well despite the pandemic. Again, Ana's conversational code-switching, "Oga, find something for me ooo" leads to a complicated extracommunicative knowledge: Ana is likely not having anything to sustain her at the time she communicated with Oloko. Also, Oloko might have been in a position of employing her or connecting her to another employer/employment.

Again, she might also be looking forward to teaching in another university, possibly where Oloko teaches. Again, she might have been soliciting financial assistance from Oloko. Again, it is indicated that their shared common metamessages, extracommuntive knowledge and the application of Pidgin help in the free flow of this communicative event thereby leading to attempted bridge of academic distancing between the interlocutors.

Interexchange C
Student (a): Hello ma, it me Moyo
Lecturer (b): Hello Moyo
Student (c): It me, Moyo
Lecturer (d): Yes
Student: (e): My laptop developed problem
Lecturer (f): Yes
Student (g): My laptop developed problem
Student (h):   Have not been able to continue my work
Lecturer (i) Yes, how far with your work?
Student (k): My laptop developed problems
Student (l): My dad took it to be repaired
Lecturer (l): I have not been able to access your chapter one

The students opening expressive information "hello ma, it me, Moyo" indicates that the speaker has a social background knowledge that although the lecturer might have been familiar with the voice, she might not have known the speaker in this context. Without hesitation, she introduced herself to the lecturer. The contextual presupposition here is that, Moyo does not want to waste time in introducing herself, possibly because, she does not want to delay the interaction or that she does not have enough credit to communicate freely. The extracommunicative knowledge of the lecturer also enables her to communication freely with the student. The student then applies alignments in (c), (e), (f) to explicate her contextualization frames to the lecturer. The use of role alignment, in (d) (f), (g) and (k), here, further strengthens the emphatic expressive information uttered by Moyo.

Moyo's final utterance "My dad took it to be repaired" necessitates her contextual presupposition that the lecturer might have misunderstood the context and the extent at which she has gone to get the laptop ready for her work. Having

retrieved Moy\s contextual preposition, the lecturer is likely to react positively by given Moyo extra time to work and might as well treat her as a serious student. In addition, the lecturer's "I have not been able to access your Chapter one," has multiple contextual prepositions and communicative intentions; there is a shift of frames from Moyo's to the lecturer's thereby complicating the assumptions and intentions. The lecturer might have nursed the feeling that the student should not be in a hurry since she has not been able to access her Chapter one; but lacks the effrontery to say it openly bearing in mind that the student may capitise on that to relax. Again, the lecturer's expressive information might have helped the listeners to deduce that Moyo is writing Chapter two of her project. Also, the lecturer might have been in a similar predicament as Moyo's; her laptop might have also developed a similar problem that prevented her from accessing Moyo;s work and she might not have expected Moyo to feel sorry for her. Again, she might have been busy or sick and as such did not have time or good health to go through the student's work. Here, a shift in contextualization frame can result in multiple communicative inferences and interpretations and misinterpretations.

Interchange D
Lecturer (a): I waited for 300 level English students for one hour and none of them attended the class
Akin (b): Good morning Ma, the class has been cancelled.
Lecturer(c): Again, I waited for another one hour for this same student but they are no way to be found.

The contextualisation frame here is online lecturing. The students scheduled to meet with the lecturers did not attend the classes and this action led to the lecturer's unpalatable or negative reaction in (a) and (c). The contextual presupposition accrues from these cues is the misinterpretation based on the lecturer's inability to retrieve the students' true disposition. The lecturer's dashed expectations occasioned her frustration and disappointment. The lecturer' expressive information triggers Akin's seemingly intervention utterance in (b); an attempt to reconcile and rescue the communicative situation.

There is a serious gaps (misunderstanding) created between the interlocutors possibly because they have different communicative background knowledge of the footing in question. It worth noting that the discourse marker, "again", indicates the deep frustration that the lecturer experienced. This shows that

the state of the interlocutors can affect the nature and the manner in which contextual information are uttered.

Exchange I

Grace (a): Oga please, we are waiting for what you have for us in Literature seminar that Mr. Tijani and Mr. Adebaju refused to plan.

Olaniyi (b): Good morning, I was told that meeting has reached maximum participants of 100. Why only that few when we have so many members?

Aba (c): A whole state conference! With a Maximum of 100 participants

Ebi (d): The same problem here!

Ibru: Same here, I wonder

Funke (e): Same here

Adamu (f): Same with me

Akan (g): Same issue here

Uche (h): Use this for second session

This exchange involves nine (9) interlocutors with a single contextual frame on their inability to attend a crucial zoom meeting based on Literature Seminar. Grace 's expressive information, "Oga, please we are waiting for what you have for us in Literature Seminar that Mr. Tijani and Mr. Adebuja refused to plan" generates multiple contextual presuppositions such as nxiety, disappointment, frustration and sadness. She might have been anxious to attend a meeting which might have been of ultimate benefit to her but she was unable to do so; her inability results in her disappointment, frustration andsadness. The next speaker, Olaniyi's expressive information in (b) also exhibits his displeasure and dissatisfaction for his inability to attend the same meeting. One can infer that Olaniyi feels cheated. Also, one can deduce that the organisers did not plan with the mind of allowing every bona fide participant to participate in the meeting. Aba's utterance is a reaction to Olaniyi's expression. This information makes listeners to offer an assumption that a State conference was not properly organized to accommodate expected participants that a conference of this nature usually meant to accommodate. The organisers' inability to organize a meeting as supposed might have been informed by the prevalent present of Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition, Olaniyi's utterance further generates Ibru's Funke's, Adamu's and Akan's expressive information on the same topic. Their emphasis is still on the same disappointment and frustrated orchestrated by their inability to attend the said

meeting. This gives rise to a contextual presupposition that the meeting was very crucial to the speakers. The expectations of these speakers were dashed. This shows that the speakers' failure to achieve their communicative purpose can lead to unpleasant termination of utterances and further result in differing contextual presuppositions as shown in this data. Lastly, Uche's "use this for second session" acts as a mere functionless locution that has no useful solution to the general problem encountered by many interactants in this exchange. The contextual assumption is that the participants cannot perform any useful action with it as the meeting has already ended. The expressive information seems to be null but just occupying the context for its mere occurrence. This illustrates that delayed expressive information may be functionless despite its seemingly expressive potentials.

Exchange II
Abu (a): I had joined the meeting, but it is saying the meeting has ended
Otiotio (b): It's now showing the host has another meeting in progress
Ben (c):   The host has not let me in
Agbede (d): Up till now it's not letting me in, that is what it is saying o oo
Ngozi (e):   Nothing is being displayed I could see only myself
Ahmed (f):   Noble colleagues dis is ongoing and not audible
Bisi (g):   I have been trying to join the zoom meeting. I don't know what is wrong ooo, the network is not friendly
Iwere (h): Two sessions, which I sent the code later

This exchange involves eight (8) interactants and their contextualization frame is on zoom meeting. The first speaker "I had joined the meeting, but it is saying the meeting has ended;" provokes frustration. This evokes a reaction in Otiotio's expressive information "it's now showing the host has another meeting in progress," It also affirms Abu's utterance on the same contextualization frame. Similarly, Ben's (c), Agbede's utterance in (d) and Ngozi's (e) are the same expressive information uttered differently. Their contextual presuppositions are the same; frustrations and disappointments. Ben's, Agbede's and Ngozi's expressions evoke Ahmed's reaction in (f), an intervention utterance meant to enable them to know that actually the meeting was on but that it was not audible. The gap caused by this communicative event actually resulted in the unpleasant outcome experienced by the interlocutors.

Although, Ahmed's utterance seems to have offered an answer to the disposition of previous speakers before him, Bisi's expressive information indicates that there is another problem that necessitated his inability to join the meeting which Ahmed's utterance did not address at all. The inference here is that there are possible obstructions to this meeting which might have been the issue of bad network or a termination of the meeting before the participants' arrival. Lastly, Iwere's expression, "two sessions, which I sent the code later" provokes a contextual preposition that Iwere is actually the major organiser of the abortive zoom meeting and that he had sent two sessions already but that the interlocutors did not have access to these sessions. They only accessed one unsuccessful session. The listeners can infer that Iwere is astonished that the participants were unable to link up to the meeting despite the fact that he had done his best to ensure that they were connected to the meeting. Here, it is evident that these speakers have different communicative intentions that resulted in different interpretations.

The listeners can deduce from this contextualization frames that the purported zoom meeting wouldn't have been necessary if not the prevalence of covid-19 pandemic that prevented the participants from attending regular school to carry out academic activities. Also, that misunderstanding can occur between people of the same group and social backgrounds if they are unable to understand their contextualization cues and frames properly. In other words, despite the fact that the participants have the same background knowledge and address the same contextualization frame, miscommunication still ensues. With the occurrence of this communicative gap, expressive information is replete with disappointment and frustrations hence a break or distancing in academic activity of meeting attendance.

Exchange III
Funke (a): Please enough of the stress on the prayer.
Udo (b): she is not in the platform but I want to quickly remind us that there are people praying for us out there
Ken ©: Sorry it seems she is not on this platform
Funke (d): I didn't insult anyone, I just wondered.
Funke (e) I hardly say anything on this platform so if I express an opinion
Funke (f): I don't think I deserve your crucifixion sir
Udo (g): My opinion wasn't personal or because of your particular prayers.
Udo (h): I was just wondering at the numbers of comments on prayers generally. I stop making comments henceforth

Funke: (i) My dear, I am not angry with you but felt since someone has commented. It would have been enough instead of reacting to the past again

The contextualization frame here is prayer. One can deduce from this that prayer is actually stressful and unwelcome in this context. Again, the word, "stress" here has multiple communicative interpretations. It may be interpreted as "problem" or "disturbance", This expressive information provokes Udo's utterance in (b) with a contextual presupposition that non group members are not expected to make comments on the platform. Udo's utterance acts as a reminder to group members of the possible inclusion of a non-member with an extraneous information or a possible misuse of the platform (which is purely academic). Contextual presupositions accrue from Udo' utterance and generates Ken's reaction in (c), "sorry, it seems she is not on this platform". This necessitates double interpretations, one that favours Funke and simultaneously supports Udo's disposition. Funke, is unsatisfied with both Udo's and Ken's contributions and as such reacts in (d) to (f). Funke's misinterpretation of Udo's utterance results in Udo's defensive expressive information in (g) and (h). These necessitate Funke's utterance in (j). The contextual presupposition of Udo's utterances is that of self defence and a need for reconciliation while Funke's, are accommodation and resolution. The interlocutors' differing utterances shows disparity in their expressive background information and lead to the gaps created in the interactions above.

Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations
The research discovered that one, metamessages can lead to varying interpretations even where interlocutors share similar extracommuniative background. This may result in breaks caused by misinterpretations of contextual frames. Two, free flow of communicative event is a function of shared common metamessages, extracommunicative knowledge and the right application of metaphorical code-swatting. Three, a shift in contextual frame can lead to multiple extracommunicative knowledge and contextual presuppositions thereby leading to misinterpretations of communicative activities and events. Four, communicative intentions may not be realized due to possible negative communicative interference., Five, the nature and manner of how expressive information are uttered are functions of the interlocutors' psychological stage. And lastly, one expressive information can generate two asymmetrical interpretations, a positive and a negative one, simultaneously thereby leading to complicated contextual

presuppositions.

This paper focuses on academic distancing on academic activities in Nigerian universities during Covid-19 pandemic utilizing Gumperz's selected aspect of IS as its analytical approach. The researcher observes that unlike social distancing, which seems to have only positive results, academic distancing has mainly negative outcomes on academic activities. Breaks, misunderstanding, miscommunication, multiple miscoding of contextualization frames and cues and various differing contextual presuppositions accrued from some expressive information. Also, metaphorical code-switching were the indicators of academic distancing recorded during covid-19 pandemic in Nigerian universities.

The research therefore recommends that academic gaps should be bridged. And for this to be done, scholars should learn how to interact effectively; effective interaction means that first, members of academic environment or society should familiarize themselves with other members. Ambiguous incommunicative expressions should be given possible and accurate contextual presuppositions by speakers and listeners. The speakers should endeavour to make his interpretative intentions explicit to ensure that the listeners do not retrieve inaccurate contextual prepositions. Also, contextualization frames and cues should be structurally and functionally presented to distill misinterpretations. There should be limited situational and metaphorical code-switching and when applied, the speaker should present it in a very clear manner that will enable the listeners to interpret them correctly and easily. Finally, listeners and speakers should endeavour to share contextualization cues together so that interactions can easily be uttered and easily interpreted to minimise misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

References

Anderson, K.T., & Holloway, J. (2018). Discourse analysis as theory, method and epistemology in studies of education policy.https://tandfonlome.com.LITE htpps://doi.or/10.1080/02680939.2018.1552992.

Anene, J., Imam, H., & Odumah, T. (2014). Problem and prospect of e-learning in Nigerian universities. *International Journal of Technology and Inclusive Education*, 3 (2) 320 –327. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305876226_Problem_and_Prospect_E-learning_in_Nigerian_Universities

Alsoraihi, M. H. (2019). Bridging the gaps between discourse analysis and language classroom practice. https://researchgate.net https//doi.org/10.5539/elt.v12n8p79.

Anyangwa, C. (2014).Semantics: The study of meaning. In E. A. Adedun and Yaw Sekyi-Baidoo (Eds.),*English Studies in Focus: Readings in Language and Literature.* Faculty of Languages(pp220-234.). University of Education.

Bajhans, V and Goyal, A. (2020). https://www.sciencedirect,com. doi;org/10.1016/j.optan.2020.6.002.

Baxter, J (2010). Discourse-analytical approach to text and talk. In Lia Litsseliti (ed.). Research *Methods in Linguistics,*(pp 117-135). Sage.

Cross, C. (2020).www.healthychildren.org

Daramola, A. (2005). Towards understanding as a systematic functional theory (sft) f or teachers of English in Nigerian secondary schools. In *Journal of the Nigerian English Studies Association,* Vo11.1.1:65-76.

Drid, T. (2010). Discourse analysis: key concepts and perspectives, *The Effect,* 20-25.https://www.researchgate.net

Ettang, I. (2020). (Presenter). (2020,May, 14)VOA. Live Radio https://www.voanews.com/africa/nigerias-poor-face-education-challenges-during-pandemic

Gbolie, C. & Itarriett P. (2017). Students' academic performance: the role of motivation. In Education Research International. www.hindawi.com

Gossenheimer, A. N. et al. (2017). How to practice social distancing in schools. Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nim.nih.sov.pmc.

Gumperz, J. J. (1982). Discourse strategies in studies in *Interactional*

Sociolinguistics. Cambridge University Press. https://en.m.wikipedia.org.wiki.

Heiriz, W. & Kaplan, B. (1963). "Symbol formation, an organismic developmental approach to Language and the expression of t h o u g h t . Wiley. https://en.m.wikipedia,org.wiki

Hora, D. (2020). Scientific progress and the covid-19 pandemic. www.researchgate.net

https://en.m.wikipedia,org.wiki
www.cdc;gov

https://www.who.information

https://en.m. Wikipedia.org

Karimnia, A. (2009). *Tuen, A, van Dijk. Society and discourse: How s o c i a l contexts influence Text and talk*. Cambridge University.

Karimnia, A. (2011). www,researchgate,net.doi.10.1353/cj/.2011.005.

Lapipo, Y. O. & Adebori, A. (2020). Covid-19 is exacerbating the problem of educational equity in Nigeria" *Nairametrics*. fromnairametics.com/2020/04/18/covid-19-is exacerbating-the-problem-of-educational-equity-in-Nigeria/

Li Wei, M. N. (2011). The bilingualism. *Reader*. Psychology Press. Schola.google.com.

Neil, K (2020). Using social distance to strengthen university community. https//www.wuniversityworldnews.com.

Nook, E. (2011). www.researchgate.net doi.10.1037/xge0000265.

Onadeko, T. (2000). Discourse analysis: the fundamental.In (ed.) Badjide, A. *Studies in English Language.* Ibadan: Enicrownfit.

Osoba, S., &Sobola, E. (2014). Introduction to discourse analysis. In A. Adedun and Yaw Sekyi-Baidoo (Eds.). *English Studies in Focus: Readings in Language and Literature. Faculty of Languages,*199 – 2 1 7 . U n i v e r s i t y o f Education.

Rampton, B. (2017). *Interactional Sociolinguistics.* TPC-RanS-175. https://www.fibirguniversity.edu.

Rashidi, N. & Rafieerad, M. (2010). Analysing patterns of classroom interaction in EFL in Iran.https://researchgate.net.

Schifrin, D. (1994). *Approaches to discourse.* Blackwell Publishers.

Traynor, M. (2006).*Methodological issues in nursing research.* Blackwell Publishing Limited.

Anana Mariam, Ph.D., is a lecturer at the Department of Languages, Mountain Top University, Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, Ogun State.
Email: ananamariam67@gmail.com