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Demystifying the Notion of Charisma: Micro-Ethnography on a Veteran-Teacher's Classroom Practices

Olga Gould-Yakovleva Ph.D.

Eastern New Mexico University, olgagoul@buffalo.edu

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Demystifying the Notion of Charisma: Micro-Ethnography on a Veteran-Teacher's Classroom Practices

Abstract

This IRB-approved and grounded in social semiotics theory micro-ethnographic case study was conducted within a longitudinal ethnography project and is focused on the teaching style of one veteran teacher in a public urban elementary school in the North-Eastern United States. The data in this qualitative micro-ethnographic case study were collected from multiple sources (e.g., field notes, observations, interviews, audio- and video-recordings). The interview data were analyzed using Saldaña's (2013) thematic and value coding. The focus research participants' verbal and non-verbal behaviors during her interactions with her students were analyzed in accordance with the micro-ethnographic research traditions. The above data were triangulated with the ones from the multimodal language analysis. This research found that teachers may set the goal and develop in themselves highly attractive for students so-called charismatic professional qualities.

Keywords

best teacher qualities, charismatic teaching style, elementary school teaching, micro-ethnographic case study, multimodal language analysis

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Acknowledgements

As the final chord in this ode to the charismatic teaching style, I would like to add some quotes from the focus research participant, the veteran teacher Mrs. Diana Smith (pseudonym). Let these words sound like a covenant to generations of practicing teachers. Firmly and genuinely, Diana assured: I would never allow anything to happen to your child that I would not allow to happen to my child. I happened to have come from a life that wasn't easy: I grew up with adoptive parents, both of whom were highly educated Ph.D. and drunks. I lost my daughter due to an illness and one of my sons due to suicide, so... I know where these kids are coming from. I learned very early in life that humor can defuse anything. You can learn so much better when you are laughing. When you corner the kids, they must fight back. They must. But when I made them laugh, I knew I've got them. I say to my student-teachers, "You have just to be you. Do what you can do best. And if you do not like what you are doing, get the heck out of it." I come to school happy, I go home happy. It is the way I am.

Demystifying the Notion of Charisma: Micro-Ethnography on a Veteran-Teacher's Classroom Practices

Olga Gould-Yakovleva
Eastern New Mexico University, Portales New Mexico, USA

This IRB-approved and grounded in social semiotics theory micro-ethnographic case study was conducted within a longitudinal ethnography project and is focused on the teaching style of one veteran teacher in a public urban elementary school in the North-Eastern United States. The data in this qualitative micro-ethnographic case study were collected from multiple sources (e.g., field notes, observations, interviews, audio- and video-recordings). The interview data were analyzed using Saldaña's (2013) thematic and value coding. The focus research participants' verbal and non-verbal behaviors during her interactions with her students were analyzed in accordance with the micro-ethnographic research traditions. The above data were triangulated with the ones from the multimodal language analysis. This research found that teachers may set the goal and develop in themselves highly attractive for students so-called charismatic professional qualities.

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Introduction

Large populations of general audiences in the United States can relate their experiences to schooling. The great majority of people in technologically advanced countries of today have been exposed to formal education. Current and former students might categorize their teachers by different personal and professional qualities. Many people would recognize that some of their educators were their best or favorite teachers. Numerous audience members might state they respected those educators for their qualities and behaviors. Nevertheless, certain individuals might confess that they and their classmates loved and even adored a particular teacher, often unexplainably and unconditionally. While respecting educators for their qualities such as fairness, kindness, or wisdom can be logically understood and explained, the phenomenon of children's love to some of their teachers is a subtle area, which has not been sufficiently studied. With regards to the above statement, the purpose of this micro-ethnographic case study was to have a deeper insight in the phenomenon of charismatic teaching in order to better understand the nature of charismatic behaviors and qualities in educators and add to the previously conducted, though scarce, research. As early as in 1990s, Archer's research participants identified charismatic teaching as excellent teaching practices with special emphasis on such teacher quality as caring (Archer, 1994). Later, Bolkan and Goodboy (2011) defined charisma as a leader's or an educator's ability to communicate dynamically and sensitively with their surroundings. Though, these researchers recognized that the phenomenon of charisma and its qualities have not been extensively studied (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2014).

The significance of this current micro-ethnographic case study is in its productive endeavor to close the existing gap in research on charismatic teacher qualities. The findings of

this current study might allow vast audiences of educators to gain a deeper understanding of the essence of those teaching practices and styles, which were characterized as highly attractive by the students of the teacher in the focus of this study. Learning these best teaching practices and behaviors demonstrated by the focus research participant, a public elementary school teacher in one of the school districts in the Northeastern United States, might allow educators to adopt her teaching methods and communication manner.

As a matter of course, it needs to be recognized that there had been some previous attempts to understand the notion of charisma pertaining to educators. One of the most prominent researchers in this field, Archer (1994) studied charismatic teaching style in depth. This author stressed the importance of a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of charisma for pedagogic purposes. Archer contemplated:

The study of charisma in teaching is important for both theoretical and practical reasons. If, as is being proposed here, charismatic teaching exists as a phenomenon, it is important to determine if only for theoretical interest the nature of this phenomenon, its properties and its relationships. In doing so, the general understanding of the teacher-student relationship would be enhanced. (1994, p. 5)

As it follows from Archer's (1994) statement above, teaching and learning processes often take form of a relationship between teachers and their students. This relation may have several forms, e.g., it might be viewed as a relationship between a teacher and his/her class, or a teacher and every individual student, or a leading teacher within a school faculty and a student body, etc. Naturally, the need in this current study on the topic of charismatic teaching was underpinned by the potential applicability of this topic to vast educational audiences on all grade levels and in higher education nation-wide in the United States and globally. Principally, the high significance of studying the topic of charismatic teaching lies in the connection between this research findings and implications and their implementation in practical classroom teaching in the USA and internationally.

With regards to the above, this micro-ethnographic case study focused on observing classroom teaching practices and relationships between the veteran teacher, Mrs. Diana Smith (pseudonyms are used throughout this paper) and her students in some of her classes at an American public urban elementary school in the northeastern USA.

The major research question was: "What behavioral, linguistic, and interpersonal qualities of the teacher in the focus of this study allow this teacher to effectively engage students in that particular school in rich social interactions?"

This research also considered some sub-questions:

1. What linguistic behaviors are characteristic of the subject's social interactions?
2. What are the traceable patterns in the subject's behaviors/actions?
3. What are the patterns in the subject's facial expressions, body language, and positioning in space?

Theory and Literature Overview

Theory

This current study was grounded in semiotics and social semiotics theories. The questions related to human social behaviors have been studied by many renowned theorists and

researchers in the field of semiotics and social semiotics (Frank & Jewitt, 2001; Kress, 2001, 2011; van Leeuwen, 2005; Vološinov, 1973). Observing verbal and non-verbal behaviors allows humans to better understand the meaning of interpersonal communication. Frank and Jewitt (2001) notice that, “Focusing on the human body as material for making meaning, we look at the ways in which pupils as groups or individuals make and reveal meaning through gesture, posture, ‘face-work’” (p. 205). Further on, these authors clarify that, “The body, as material and vehicle of action, is fundamental to understanding the meaning of action” (p. 208). Thus, humans need thoughtful input for developing successful communication or relationships. Vološinov’s idea supports the findings by the above authors; this author states, “Every action, every utterance, is made with the consciousness of other social actors, who watch, listen and respond” (Vološinov, 1973 in Frank & Jewitt, 2001, p. 9). Based on the statements above, one can conclude that it is not only linguistic, but also physical behaviors that affect interpersonal communication and / or relationship (Kress, 2001; Van Leeuwen, 2005).

Primarily, is important to understand that exteriorized behaviors need to be evaluated in a complex interdependent relation with the interior ones, such as thinking and feeling. Frank and Jewitt (2001) recognize that actions are often seen as, “a partially articulated semiotic system which, in reciprocal and dialectical relation, continually both realizes and constructs the social world in both thought and deed” (p. 204). As follows from the above, it is crucially important for this current study to focus on the observable and audible semiotics in the subject’s behaviors.

Equally important for this research purposes, it was to discern and understand the differences between two types of charisma. Interestingly, the first type is the external charisma where a charismatic person may have little to no positive qualities underlining their attractive exterior. On the contrary, the second type of charisma is based on combination of highly attractive and positive external and internal qualities, personal traits, features of personality, behaviors, as well as sincere and genuine habits of interpersonal communication (Bakhtin, 1981).

So, what the author of this paper intended to deeply understand was exactly the existence of the presumable connection between the inner lifeworld and its exterior manifestations in this research participant. Notably, the assumption and the claim of this current research is that the above qualities may be elicited, fostered, or educated in a person. If so, many interested educators might have the potential to change their teaching practices significantly and positively for a great benefit to their students.

Literature Review

To deeper understand social semiotics processes and the roots of behavioral patterns in the focus research participant, the author of this paper reviewed the available literature on the topic of charismatic teaching. The phenomenon of charisma is very often associated with power, energy, and enthusiasm (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2014; Switzer, 2007). The American and international researchers attempted to study this topic (Archer, 1994; Fantuzzo, 2015; Hockings et al., 2009; Huang & Lin, 2014). Their findings are well worth acclaim and attention.

Archer (1994) states that charismatic teachers may not necessarily be the most skilled or knowledgeable ones. This author conveys that students and teachers generally agree that some charismatic educators, though highly attractive to their students, do not always meet their learners’ expectations in terms of a “classroom product.” Yet, there is another category of charismatic teachers, which, according to Archer (1994), attracts their student audiences with their extraordinary intellectual prowess. Archer (1994) has also identified the third aspect of teacher charisma: it is a combination of charismatic qualities, both personal and professional. Archer found that often students readily forgive their charismatic teachers’ being less

knowledgeable. From the point of view of those students, the presence of charisma in a teacher's personality outweighs the need for many other qualities, including the teacher's knowledge of the subject matter. Thus, little is yet known about the essence of charisma in teaching as well as in communication and behavior of educators.

Attempting to understand the above phenomena, Fantuzzo (2015) comes out with a highly optimistic exhortation. Grounding his research in Socratic postulates and Weberian (1947, 2011) social theory principles, Fantuzzo (2015) believes that practically every person may possess charismatic qualities. Further on, this author conveys the idea that, "The Weberian educator has faith that charismatic capacities are latent in the student" (Fantuzzo, 2015, p. 58), meaning, potentially, every student. This empiricist believes that it is teachers' task to elicit charisma in their students. Regardless of the undeniable value of this researcher's findings and implications, the quintessence of the notion of charisma remains yet an enigma.

Focusing on charisma in teachers, Hockings et al. (2009) suggest that "development of more inclusive and engaging pedagogies" (p. 492) as well as supportive attitude in teachers towards their students might be regarded as charismatic teaching. Switzer (2007) believes those teachers who thoughtfully select and utilize for instructional purposes the most popular among their students' physical objects make teaching and learning processes highly attractive to their learners. The above idea is also confirmed in Gould-Yakovleva et al. (2020) and Curwood (2014). Stressing the importance of motivating learners, Bolkan and Goodboy (2014) notice that one of the major characteristics of charismatic teaching is adherence to such teaching style which leads to a greater "influence on students' intrinsic motivation and students' perception of their learning" (p. 136). The value of the contribution to the field from the above researchers is indisputable. Yet, they seem to be discussing the outcome of the charismatic teaching on students rather than investigating the depth of a charismatic personality.

Presumably, it is possible to consider some resemblance between the best teacher qualities and the charismatic one. For example, Bain (2004) comes out with a range of teacher qualities, which were highly appreciated by students and lead to extremely satisfying for them learning experiences. Summarizing this author's findings, good educators are expected to be knowledgeable, well versed in their subject area and related fields, passionate about teaching, good at communicating and delivering their ideas, positive by nature, patient and understanding, insightful when investigating the roots of their students' struggle with the content, resourceful, motivating, technologically literate, willing to further advance their skills with the latest technology, curious, open-minded, cooperative, attentive, skillful discussion leaders and conversation starters, who are respectful to cultural differences and peculiarities, non-judgmental, and unprejudiced, etc. Bain's (2004) research also believes that good teachers are expected to be able to maintain friendly atmosphere in class, to route their students' relationships towards cooperation and collaboration, able to manage, prevent or de-escalate arising conflicts, able to control their own emotions, and so on. Yet, the followers of Archer (1994) might argue against the findings by Bain (2004) as Archer's research found that many of the qualities eulogized by Bain (2004) were not necessarily considered highly attractive by the students of the teachers with charisma. This controversy in the available research implies the idea of necessity of more studies on the topic discussed in this paper.

Most certainly, it is important to recognize that the list of best teacher qualities might be expanded. According to the researchers who studied the nature of attractive teaching (e.g., Archer, 1994; Bain, 2004; Hockings et al., 2009), the most valued representatives of charismatic teaching style possess combinations of multiple qualities, where being supportive and caring most often top the survey lists. There remains the need, though, to investigate the exact components of those combinations. Thus, obviously, more research is needed.

In addition to the research on charisma and charismatic teaching, several micro-ethnographic studies were reviewed in preparation to this current project (e.g., Bezemer &

Mavers, 2011; Derry et al., 2012; Erickson, 2011). Many researchers focus on dialogues between their research participants (e.g., Blackledge & Creese, 2009; Erickson, 2004; Gee, 2011; Higgins et al., 2003; Lefstein & Snell; 2011; Mehan, 1996). Some of the authors pay special attention to social interaction patterns, verbal, and physical behaviors of their subjects (e.g., Mehan, 1979; Miller, 2011; Moore, 2008; Oliveira et al., 2011; Sert, 2012; Wetherell, 2011). For example, Shultz and Florio's (1979) study seems to be particularly interesting due to its focus on the research participants' movements and positioning in the space, which will be also scrutinized by the author of this current paper with the purpose to gain a deeper understanding of the behaviors employed by the charismatic teacher in the focus of this study.

To conclude the report of the results of this literature review, it needs to be stated that the research conducted by the author of this paper intends to fill in the identified gap via conducting multimodal analysis of the video- and audio-recorded verbal and non-verbal behaviors employed by the focus research participant in relation to the students in her classroom. This analysis may help identify the features and qualities in the subject's communication manner and teaching style, which are perceived by her students as irresistibly attractive or charismatic. The uniqueness of this current research is in both: its qualitative method and the questions it aims to understand and answer.

Method

Role of the Researcher

Sensing my audiences' curiosity about the choice of the topic and bearing the urge to explain some prehistory and the motive behind this study, I will slightly and briefly open the door into my lifeworld. The phenomenon of charisma has been intriguing me since my first encounters with charismatic people. Growing up in the unique social environment of the "people of the stage" such as musicians, actors, entertainers, artists, and all-level educators provided me with plethora of opportunities to observe their unparalleled in its attractiveness behavior and its impact on the audiences while leaving me with too many questions to ponder about the nature of the protuberating charisma in those distinctive personalities.

Reading the available literature has not quite helped me to answer all the intriguing questions. By a fluke, during my work within another, longitudinal research project in an elementary school setting, I caught sight of an amazing veteran teacher in the last year preceding her retirement. In some way, unexpectedly and unconditionally, this personality strongly attracted my attention. To confess that I was charmed by this unusual person would be to say nothing about my being bewildered by this educational professional' positive nature and her flamboyant temperament manifestations. The remarks I received from this teacher's colleagues and students confirmed my guess of this veteran teacher possessing a charismatic disposition.

Being moved by my internal interest to deeper understand the quintessence of the phenomenon of charisma, I designed this qualitative case study. The preference was given to the audio-recorded interviews as the major research instrument for dwelling deep into my participant's inner lifeworld. A multimodal language analysis of the video-recorded episodes with my focus participant was selected as the method for gaining the evidence-based understanding of this teacher's external behaviors and interactions with her students. Subsequently, I developed the research questions and created the research plan. As soon as I received the IRB approval, I offered this charismatic teacher-veteran to take part in my study, and she immediately, willingly, and very positively agreed.

According to my plan, I started collecting data from multiple sources. I visited my research site regularly on weekly basis with the purpose to observe that school's culture, the

site operations, the atmosphere in the school, and interactions between the teacher in the focus of my study and her students, teachers, and staff in the building. I conducted two interviews with the teacher in the focus of my study and engaged in informal conversations with the school students and teachers in order to better understand the school's culture and the role my research participant played in that school community. I audio-recorded and transcribed the interviews and analyzed the verbal data looking for recurring themes, values, and patterns (Saldaña, 2013). Additionally, I video-recorded my research participant while teaching her students or interacting with them before and after classes. Then, I made a transcript of a 2:41 minute-long video, where my participant communicated with her students in class. I conducted multimodal language analysis of this video-episode (Gould, 2016, 2019). The audio-recorded and transcribed interviews with the research participant allowed me to have a deeper insight into my focus participant's life story and its development. Finally, I triangulated the data from my observations, the interviews with the focus participant and her students and the data from my multimodal language analysis. This work resulted in a deeper understanding of the essence of the charismatic nature of my research participant, peculiarities of her language and communication manner, as well as her other external behaviors. The story of life shared by this personality in her interviews combined with the currently observable behaviors and language in this teacher allowed me to draw the conclusions, which will be further shared in this paper.

More About the Participant

As it follows from the above section, I utilized purposeful sampling for this study (Creswell, 2007). I selected this one veteran teacher, Diana Smith (pseudonym), to become the focus participant in this micro-ethnographic case study. This choice was made since this teacher enjoyed outstanding popularity among her students, her colleagues at the school, as well as in the greater local community. Diana was a veteran teacher who taught across three generations of students at her public urban school district. In her interviews, Diana shared that she used to teach parents and even grandparents of her current students. During their informal conversations with me, Diana's students and her colleagues often referred to this person as fantastic, great, and wonderful, which confirmed my choice of this subject.

Through multiple conversations with the school community members, I found out that many people considered this teacher a very special person. I believed that I chose the right research participant for my study on charismatic teaching style and charismatic teacher qualities since both: teachers and students at that school repeatedly expressed to me their appreciation of this teacher's high intellectual qualities, her deep and broad general and content knowledge, her highly positive and supportive personality features, including her sparkling sense of humor.

Site

I conducted my study at the urban elementary public school in the Northeastern United States where Mrs. Diana Smith taught for decades. The student population of this school consisted predominantly of children from disadvantaged and low socio-economic status families. About 90 percent of the students were eligible for free or reduced cost lunch. The school building was in a predominantly low-income urban neighborhood. The school student population was widely multicultural and multi- or polylingual. Many students were habitually wearing their ethnic and national outfits. Some of the students were the children of newly arrived immigrants, while the others came from the families of refugees who obtained temporary residential status in the United States. The school hallways were decorated with the

flags of those countries whose representatives formed this school's student body (See Figure 1 below for representation of diversity in the school culture).

Figure 1

Representation of Diversity in the School's Culture



Duration of the Study

I was observing the site, the teachers, and the students for a period of several consecutive months, from the beginning until the end of the school year within a larger longitudinal study. I was highly interested in observing the school's culture to get the feel of the overall atmosphere at school on different weekdays and during special event (See Figure 2 below for getting the feel of the school culture reflected in student-created art works).

Figure 2

School Culture Reflected in Student-Created Art Works



I identified and recruited the potential participant for my micro-ethnographic case study on charismatic teaching style in January. Since that time, till the end of that school year, I concentrated my attention specifically on this teacher in the focus of this current study.

Data Collection

Observations

In the process of this research, I collected the data via multiple site observations. I was taking field notes and added my analytical memos to them (Saldaña, 2013). I observed my focus research participant while paying special attention to her discourse and social interactions with her students, colleagues, and other members of the school community (Gee, 2011; Spradley, 1980). I engaged in multiple informal conversations with my research participant, with some of her colleagues, the teachers at that school, and with her students. I took notes and memos after every conversation. I also videotaped some episodes of my research participant's social interactions and behaviors when in-class and during the breaks between her lessons (Erickson, 2011). To ensure trustworthiness of my data, I controlled myself against any

possible biases and put my strongest endeavor to be transparent about my perspectives. With this purpose, I paid attention to what *the teachers* and *students* at school said about my focus research participant rather than focusing on my own perceptions and opinions. Subsequently, I conducted a series of observations of the lessons given by my research participant to her students. I took notes (Saldaña, 2013) while observing interactions between the children and their charismatic teacher. I also observed the focus research participant in informal situations, for example, between her classes and after school in the school building. In the process of this current study, I attended and observed a total of six lessons given by my research participant in different classes on grade levels 6 through 8. I collected about two hours of recorded information, including 20:75 minutes of video recordings and one hour and 27 minutes of audio-recordings.

Interviews

I audiotaped and transcribed all the interviews conducted with my research subject or concerning her. I interviewed my research participant and her students (Seidman, 2013) and asked the children to share with me their thoughts about their teacher, Mrs. Smith. I asked them “to describe” this teacher, which they willingly did.

To sum up, I conducted two interviews with the teacher in the focus of my study (42:16 and 19:23 minutes long respectively) using Alexander’s (2010), Erickson’s (2004), and Seidman’s (2013) qualitative interviewing postulates as guidelines. I also interviewed some of her students in three different groups (five, eight, and nine children in each session). The grouping was based on these students’ availability during their extra-curricular activities after classes. The interviews were semi-structured as I wanted to give students their complete freedom with choosing the topics to address without my leading them to any possible answers. The time of recordings of my conversations with the students totaled 25:34 minutes. All the above constituted the data in this study.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data from multiple sources (e.g., participant and site observations, interviews with the focus participant and the school community members, field notes, memos, recordings). To gain a deeper understanding of the nature of Diana’s charisma or attractiveness of the language employed by her, I conducted multimodal language analysis of a short 2:43 minute-long video episode of Diana’s teaching one of her classes. I stopped the video every time the picture changed and made a screen shot. I selected 40 screenshots to analyze and developed 20 pages of a five-column table. The columns contained the following information: (1) time and spoken language, (2) image (screenshot), (3) postural behavior / body position, (4) gestures / gaze, and (5) description of the events in the episode (Gould, 2016, 2019). I described in detail the visual information in every snapshot (e.g., my participant’s position in space, her head position, gaze direction, etc.). I also transcribed and added to my analysis the auditory information in every snapshot (i.e., my research participant’s speeches and her students’ responses to them). I visually and aurally scrutinized every several second-long episodes in the video under analysis. I looked to identify this teacher’s characteristic traits, nature-specific gestures, habitual behaviors, oral language peculiarities, and other features, which made teaching and interpersonal communication style of my research participant charismatic or highly attractive to her surrounding audiences.

I triangulated the data collected through my interviews: (1) with my focus research participant, (2) with her students, and (3) the data from my informal conversations with this teacher’s colleagues. While analyzing the data from formal and informal conversations. I

utilized thematic and value coding (Saldaña, 2013), looked for recurring themes and values across all the interviews, and organized fine-detailed themes into larger categories. I also matched the data from my observational notes to the data from the videos with sound of my research participant's teaching. I paid special attention to the data from my multimodal analysis of the subject's social interactions with her students. To analyze these interactions, I stopped the video-recording every time the picture in the focus of the camera changed. I made a screenshot of each new moment and scrutinized every episode. The above work resulted in developing the major themes, while the themes shaped into larger categories. The multimodal analysis from the video- and audio-recorded data in combination with the audio-recorded and transcribed data, which underwent Saldaña's (2013) thematic and value analysis, combined with the unbiased analysis from the documented and memoed (Miles & Huberman, 1984) observations (Spradley, 1980) allowed me to answer my research questions and sub-questions.

Finally, I synthesized all my data according to the qualitative data analysis postulates by the coryphaei of the qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Ely et al., 1994; Glesne, 2010; Saldaña, 2015; Seidman, 2013). Upon having conducted the data analysis, I came up with the findings, which I shared with my peers and colleagues at the National and International conferences to ensure trustworthiness and avoid possible biases. My presentations received only positive remarks; this fact allowed me to proceed with disseminating my research findings via publishing this current research report. In the Findings section below, my reading audiences will be introduced to the findings based on my observation of the focus research participant's classroom teaching, findings based on the interview data, and the insights from the multimodal micro-ethnographic analysis.

Findings

Findings Based on Classroom Activities Observations

Observations of Mrs. Diana Smith teaching confirmed the data from my conversations with Diana's students, who named as the most valued quality of this teacher her being caring and extremely helpful. Children believed this teacher attended to their needs very seriously, and my observations supported their sincere statements. Next outstanding quality of Diana, as repeatedly stressed by her students, was, "her sense of humor, ability to play jokes, and make everybody laugh." To provide just one example of Diana's joking and making her students laugh, I will embed below an excerpt from the anecdotal notes to my video-recordings:

When Diana's students spotted me as a new and unknown to them person with the camera in my hands in the back of their classroom, the children's natural curiosity moved them to question their teacher about who I was.

"Oh, never mind, it's just my mom," Diana carelessly waved her hand in my direction while imitating a child's speech via stressing and stretching the sound /o/ in the word 'Mom.' Her words and actions made everybody, including myself, heartily laugh out loud as, due to the difference in appearance and overall style, I, most definitely, did NOT look anywhere close to that imaginative long-time retired person who could be in the age and position of Diana's mother.

Importantly, while combining the two notions, Diana's students characterized her as "hilarious", but "very serious when needed." And that was exactly what I observed during my visits to Diana's classroom. Although this teacher frequently utilized jokes and humor in class,

during practically all my observations of Diana teaching her students, the children showed themselves as highly motivated learners well taken care of by this teacher. For example, Diana developed a series of lessons on water pollution. This teacher presented the subject matter in such a way that every person in her class realized that it was not only a classroom activity but a real-life task. Students received an assignment to help their city resolve some ecological problems. So, these young learners conducted their own research and looked for some possible solutions, which could minimize some of the serious local ecological problems, such as water pollution in the nearby natural reservoirs. Notably, all students in class were visibly actively engaged in the above activities.

When Diana assigned the children to work in small groups, she was continually roaming the room while in constant interaction with her students. Her communication style was very friendly and had a noticeable “magically” uplifting effect on the learners. Students’ behaviors, e.g., their facial expressions and the tone of their voices showed appreciation of this teacher’s positive and supportive way of communicating. Many children in Diana’s classes looked visibly more energized after every act of interpersonal communication with this teacher. Students looked excited about the work they were performing. The overall positive atmosphere in Diana’s classes showed that this teacher managed to create a unique interactive teaching and learning culture in her classroom.

During one of my observations, the major tasks for 7th Grade students included working with the local lake and river maps. The children were supposed to conduct their own research online. For this purpose, they used the teacher-supplied reading materials, which helped them identify and document the levels of pollution in the specific local lakes and rivers. Then, these young researchers were supposed to mark the polluted areas on the geographic maps in different colors. Every color was associated with a higher or lower level of pollution. For example, green color indicated clean, unpolluted area, blue showed lightly polluted waters, purple was used to mark substantially contaminated areas, while red color showed highest levels of pollution and contamination of the water reservoirs under investigation. One after another, different small groups of students came up to the computer, searched for the new data needed for their part in the research. Subsequently, these young researchers entered the found data in their worksheets. While being deeply engaged in their work, these learners carefully organized the newly obtained numeric and textual data into charts, tables, and graphs.

Diana kept roaming the room and attended to every individual student’s work within each group. Her facial expression showed her satisfaction with the results of her students’ work. The children were focused on their tasks and looked absorbed in the learning processes. The students’ deep engagement showed through their postures, gazes, and positions of their heads. In the process of small group discussions and problem solving, the children all leaned towards the center of their small group so that their heads almost touched. Ongoing school radio announcements did not distract the children from their work. Students seemed to be completely immersed in the tasks they were performing. Every small group of children clustered into a mini community of collaborators. Besides conducting their mini research projects and solving the real-life problems, each group kept in mind their next task: they had to present the findings of their research in front of the whole class. Diana ensured a supportive and friendly atmosphere during this collaborative learning processes via engaging each group member into conversations and discussions with herself and the other group members. The friendly, yet professional, nature of these on-going academic dialogues between all present community members and their teacher served as inevitable evidence of the fact that Diana created a very specific collaborative learning culture around herself.

I have never observed Diana standing and lecturing in front of her class. She did not practice lecturing teaching style. Instead, this educator employed research-based, project-based, experiential, discovery, and hands-on teaching and learning. This teacher orally set her

expectations of the outcome for each task; she also provided handouts with printed directions. Usually, Diana handed to her students some teacher-developed worksheets where she explained all directions, procedures, and requirements. Diana's students demonstrated their being trained to attentively read these directions and guidelines prior to and during their practical classwork. The children showed their well-developed habit of performing their work independently. When needed, they consulted their group members, neighboring groups, and their teacher. This showed the highly collaborative nature of Diana's classroom culture.

During her class time, Diana was in constant motion. She demonstrated her being caring, positive, supportive, cooperative, and enthusiastic. Diana skillfully identified the students in need of assistance and attended to their problems. This teacher showed genuine interest in her students' suggestions and questions about their tasks. It was a traceable pattern that Diana did not practice providing easy hints or ready answers to her students, neither did she utilize prescriptive tone. Rather than that, Diana asked her students to explain their logic and their thinking paths orally. She listened very attentively and very seriously. Only afterwards, when the students explained their perspectives, this teacher would express her thinking with regards to the speakers' vision of the problem and its possible solutions. Even in those instances when some students got stuck and struggled with developing new ideas on their own, Diana would not provide any solutions from the position of her being more educated and experienced. Instead, this teacher referred the struggling thinkers to internet-based resources or to the data in the teacher-developed worksheets, reference books, maps, etc. Diana fostered the culture of capable, independent, critical thinkers, doers, and achievers. This teacher's line of behavior showed to her students that she trusted in their intellectual abilities and aptitude and gave them the time, encouragement, advice, and opportunities to complete their tasks with the highest results possible.

Importantly, Diana educated her students in multiple aspects. For example, this teacher practiced her own unique way to combine teaching content and correcting or preventing potential negative behaviors in her students. For instance, this educator aimed to get her students familiarized with the unwanted consequences of such negative behaviors as alcohol or tobacco use. For this purpose, in her science classes, Diana discussed information on the damage to fetuses made by cigarette-smoking mothers. Diana explained to her students that children born with very low birth weight were prone to develop multiple behavioral problems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Furthermore, these behavioral problems in children with low birth weight might contribute to the development of teenage syndrome. Diana concluded that this syndrome tends to escalate throughout the teen age. One of the unwanted results of this chain of negative effects might be lower academic achievement of the affected students. Yet, instead of lecturing, Diana would strongly encourage her students to engage in their own internet-based research on each of the initiated by herself topics where the rich information supported by the powerful graphic visuals contributed to the learning effects.

Importantly, Diana made a special emphasis on teaching her growing students-scientists specific researcher skills and habits. She steadily prompted her learners to look for and identify patterns in the research-based evidence. This teacher repeatedly encouraged her elementary school learners to act like scientists. She fostered the culture of growing scientists in her school. Diana persistently prompted her students to look for evidence, think critically, and contemplate scientifically. She strongly discouraged her students from making assumptions. This educator warned her young researchers that they should control their own biases. She also taught her students to always implement their best educated guesses and conduct their own research to support their initial hypotheses. Yet, regardless of her very serious scientific approach to teaching and learning, this educator managed to turn her classroom activities into educational fun for her students. The major observable factor, which helped Diana to make content acquisition fun for her students, was her outstanding

communication style. This teacher's incorporation of humor formed an observable pattern. Besides the conclusion based on my observations, Diana's students repeatedly mentioned in their interviews their great satisfaction with and appreciation of the usage of humor by this teacher.

Findings Based on Interviews

The data from the interviews with Mrs. Diana Smith and her students supported the evidence obtained through observations of Diana teaching her classes and interacting with her class members. In the interviews, her students explained why they respected their teacher. The children characterized Diana as highly knowledgeable in the content areas she was teaching. The students' perspectives supported the data from Diana's interviews. This teacher shared that she had previously mastered Python and Alice computer programming software within the university-based Summer Institute. She was painstakingly working on this task over the whole summer school break.

Parallel to mastering Python and Alice, Diana was also studying such educational programs as Study Island and Youth Digital. With this newly acquired knowledge, Diana effectively engaged her students in working with these programs. These data from the interviews with Diana and my conversations and interviews with her students supported the data from my observations of Diana's classes in the school computer lab. There, this teacher demonstrated her extraordinary ability to motivate students in mastering the challenging digital learning content.

Diana shared that her way to the mastership was a strenuous struggle and a prolonged challenge. Yet, the result of this teacher's summer studies exceeded her expectations. Diana shared that her students showed a stronger engagement when exposed to the latest technologies-based teaching and learning processes in her classes.

Yet, it needs to be said that it was Diana's charismatic personality and teaching style that played the most significant role in her students' engagement with the new digital educational tools, which she brought to her classroom. For example, some students shared that Diana's humorous, cheerful, and highly uplifting behaviors were consistent with this teacher over a very long period. Some students shared that they heard stories about Diana's disposition and cheerful teaching style from their older siblings, from their parents, grandparents, and other older relatives who had been Diana's students years ago. This finding allowed me to conclude that Diana's charisma did not stem from her implementation of highly attractive for students, thus charismatic objects or subjects. Moreover, the very source of charisma was Diana's personality. This understanding moved my data analysis to the next level, where I attempted to have a deeper look into Diana's external behaviors and exteriorized language.

Findings Based on Micro-Ethnographic Multimodal Analysis

To get a deeper understanding of the effects from verbal and non-verbal behaviors of my research participant on her students, I conducted my micro-ethnographic multimodal language analysis of the transcript of one video-recorded episode of Diana interacting with her students in the school computer lab. I selected this short episode, which lasted only two minutes and 43 seconds because it was rich in interactions between my focus research participants and her students.

This type of micro-ethnographic multimodal language analysis allowed me to understand that Diana's behaviors were highly diverse, non-repetitive, spontaneous, and rich in patterns. The data from my multimodal language analysis supported the data from my interviews with this teacher and her students and the data from my observations. Before the

class started and during teaching, Diana skillfully employed humor. Utilization of humor by this teacher was a traceable pattern of great value as confirmed by her students. The content and the style of this teacher's humorous utterances were non-repetitive and unique at every instance. Diana accompanied her verbal jokes with her ever-changing facial expressions, gestures, movements through the space, postures, and gazes, which were highly diverse, unique, and non-repetitive either. Diana was smiling, joking, and employing diverging in meaning and forms iconic, metaphoric, representational, and deictic gestures in practically every screenshot I made. This teacher was in constant movement around the classroom. Over the short period of time in this video, this teacher appeared in a new space and in a new position in the classroom in every screenshot. Diana roamed the computer lab to check how each of her students was doing on the computer-based tasks. She promptly identified the need and provided additional individualized instruction to each student. She resolved her students' problems on the go, while moving from one person to another. This evidence from my multimodal analysis supported the data obtained through the interviews with this teacher and the ones with her students. Both parties, Diana and her students confirmed that this teacher would stay with the child in need of help and support as long as it was necessary for that child to get a grasp of the challenging idea or content. The evidence in the video showed that Diana cared for each student until they found the solution to the academic problem they were struggling with. This repeatedly observed pattern supported the data from the interviews with Diana's students many of whom stated in agreement, "She would stay with you until you really understand."

On top of that, my multimodal analysis contained the evidence of a well-developed, long-standing, positive classroom climate built by Diana. The multimodal transcript documented multiple instances of reciprocal exchange of friendly and warm facial expressions between this teacher and her students. The data collected via interviews with this educator and different groups of her students supported my research assumptions about reciprocity of the positive teacher-student relationships within the observed groups of students on different grade levels. According to the students, Diana was "very uplifting and would light up and brighten your day." The data in the multimodal analysis also supports the statements by Diana's students who shared that their teacher "always made them smile." The multimodal transcript also contained visual evidence of Diana's habit of making "funny faces and sounds," as her students put it during my conversations with them. One of the students referred to this quality of Diana as her "artistic talent." The multimodal analysis helped me confirm the other findings obtained through interviews. For example, students shared in their interviews that their teacher's behavior produced a strong cheering and energizing effect on them. The video under analysis contains strong supporting data for these statements made by Diana's students.

My multimodal analysis showed that Diana positioned herself in very close proximity to her students. In the screenshots of the video under investigation, this teacher can be seen standing behind or next to each individual student who she was providing with academic or emotional support. Nevertheless, it was noticeable that Diana maintained some distance without intruding into her students' private spaces. This theme corresponds with the ones obtained through interviews with Diana where she discussed the importance of keeping the distance. This teacher recommended that it is important to not make a student feel "cornered." The evidence in the multimodal analysis supported the above data, as students looked comfortable when the teacher stood by their side and assisted them with her advice or constructive feedback.

Discussion

Summarizing the ideas presented in the Findings section of this paper, I claim that the teacher in the focus of my study demonstrated her ability to engage her students in rich

academic and social interactions due to her being highly energetic, enthusiastic, and full of positive teacher power. All the above topics discussed in the previous section support my assumption that charismatic qualities and teaching style of the educator in the focus of my research may be effective if implemented by other teachers in their practical classroom teaching. This type of practice may allow educators to effectively engage their students in rich and productive academic interactions.

In this section, I will attempt to delineate how the findings of my research support the conclusion made by Archer who stated, “Of particular interest was the finding that charismatic teachers were perceived as exhibiting caring and concern for students and were seen as energetic and enthusiastic in their classroom” (1994, p. 22). Exhaustively, the above statement by Archer fully applies to the practices by Mrs. Diana Smith whose cheerful and caring attitude made her leadership and performance especially attractive for her students (Archer, 1994). This teacher’s habitual implementation of rich non-verbal means of multimodality in her communication explains the interest in her surrounding audiences in her ever-changing external language. The above findings with regards to the positive effects from employment of multimodal language support the ones made in my previously conducted studies (Gould, 2016, 2017, 2019; Gould-Yakovleva et al., 2020; Gould-Yakovleva, 2023a, 2023b). Diana also employed a wide range of improvised humorous gestures and body postures. I claim that all the above endeavors and habits created the feeling and the atmosphere of inviting, engaging, friendly, caring, supportive, and fun-like collaboration. Notably, Diana’s behavior was rich in gesticulation, ever-evolving facial expressions, gazes, and body language. To sum up, this teacher’s semiotics and social semiotics resources, which she used on daily basis made her personality distinctively outstanding and brilliantly unique. These findings from my research support the ideas by the founding fathers of the semiotics and social semiotics theorists (e.g., Frank & Jewitt, 2001; Kress, 2001, 2011; Van Leeuwen, 2005; Vološinov, 1973). To stress it again, it was the rich semiosis that made Diana’s teaching and interpersonal communication style extraordinarily attractive to her students.

My research findings support my initial researcher assumptions and my hypothetical guesses about Diana’s personal, interpersonal, and professional teacher qualities. I found an explanation to the nature of this teacher’s attraction in the interview utterances by her students. The children characterized Diana as, “Cheerful, smart, inspirational, amazing, intelligent, energetic, respectful, kind, helpful, awesome, nice, beautiful, masterminding, creative, caring, fancy, perfect for kids, delightful, funky, outgoing, happy, spontaneous, cool, and super cool.”

According to the data from these interviews, the children strongly believed that their teacher, “**really cares** about them” (the children stressed the words *really cares*). The students also shared that this teacher, “gets down to teaching of what she has to teach and makes everything fun.”

The above replicas from Diana’s students referred to the fact that this teacher embedded highly attractive to today’s elementary school students’ digital means of education, which significantly contributed to her popularity among the school students. Mrs. Smith was highly successful at identifying the appealing to her students’ topics and means of education. This finding of the current research supports the findings in the previously conducted studies, which found that charisma in teaching is strongly associated with ability to engage while offering to students highly charismatic, i.e., most popular learning objects, as in this case, the educational technologies (e.g., Archer, 1994; Bain, 2004; Curwood, 2014; Switzer, 2007). The above findings support the ones made by the American researchers (e.g., Gould-Yakovleva et al., 2020; Hockings et al., 2009; Miller & Borowicz, 2005).

Moreover, Diana’s students stated that she, “is great in teaching and makes complicated matter easy to understand and remember.” The children also showed great appreciation of Diana’s habit “to make learning fun and show that she likes both: one’s jokes and one’s job.”

From this perspective, my research findings support Archer's ideas. This author stated that, "All students indicated that charismatic teaching (at least "good" charismatic teaching) had a salutary effect on their motivation" (1994, p. 12).

The above findings by my study support understanding of the nature of charismatic teaching by other researchers (e.g., Archer, 1994; Bain, 2004; Hockings et al., 2009). The data obtained through a series of observations with the focus on discourse support Gee's (2011) ideas. Diana's discourse appeared to be a combination of humorous and serious academic "shop talk." This teacher engaged her students in caring, intimate interpersonal conversations. Diana's discourse style showed her students that she really listened to them and heard their individual voices. The students perceived this communication style as highly important in teacher-student relationships. These findings of my research support the ideas by Alexander (2010) and Erickson (2004).

Imperatively, the findings of this study, in combination with the findings by the seminal works by the major theorists in the fields of semiotics and social semiotics (e.g., Frank & Jewitt, 2001; Kress, 2001; Van Leeuwen, 2005) allow wide audiences of educators to conclude that the phenomenon of charismatic teaching might be and needs to be considered an achievable objective for a teacher. Diana stated she developed in herself these highly effective teacher qualities, which, as this research found, strongly attracted her students. Thus, the phenomenon of charisma in teaching is a combination of best teaching practices, high intellectual prowess, good personal qualities, strong interpersonal communication skills, and positive sense of humor. The ability to perform effectively appeared to be based on this teacher's desire to develop in herself the above qualities and to utilize the rich, and diverse, verbal and non-verbal semiotic resources on daily basis outside of her classroom and during her practical teaching.

Limitations and Implications

There were some limitations to this study. One of them was that this research was conducted in only one Northeastern U.S. school district, in one elementary school, with only one participant. Further studies with a greater number of participants in different school districts, nationwide, are needed. Studying the topic of charismatic teaching may help identify some teacher qualities, which are highly attractive to students. The major implication for the potential studies would be to identify the ways and strategies for teachers to self-develop, elicit, and enhance charismatic teaching style or features in themselves. These might be predominantly external semiotic and social semiotic behaviors that may affect or "charm" the audiences. The prospective research studies might also focus on the teachers who were able to develop charismatic qualities in their students as, according to Fantuzzo (2015), positive charismatic qualities are dormant in each of us. When awakened, those qualities may help educators to engage children more effectively at schools in rich reciprocal academic and social interactions. Thus, teachers might be able to make a greater positive impact on their students via improving their teaching and learning practices and style.

Conclusive Thoughts

This research participant, Mrs. Diana Smith, taught three generations of student populations. Thus, this charismatic teacher strongly and positively affected three consecutive generations of elementary school students in her community. Diana's surroundings enjoyed the externalized verbal and non-verbal behaviors of their charismatic teacher. Consciously or subconsciously, the students were being positively influenced and affected by the exteriorized behaviors of Mrs. Diana Smith as the charisma-bearer. As per their confessions, the people around Diana were literally charmed by her verbal language, gazes, gestures, facial

expressions, etc. At the same time, they did not have any substantial knowledge about this educator's personal history, culture, her internal and out-of-school lifeworld.

The teacher in the focus of my study shared during her interviews that she put her strong effort in developing in herself the qualities which she practiced in her classroom. This educator confirmed that she consciously and thoughtfully selected the behaviors she employed during her interactions with her students and colleagues at her school. The above statement by Mrs. Smith finds support in my observations. For example, none of this teacher's students got an even slightest sign of their teacher's shattered inner world on the day Diana's son, the police officer, was shot on his duty, where Mrs. Smith taught a whole day of her classes prior to burning rubber to see her wounded son in the hospital hundreds of miles away from her school.

When questioned during the interviews, this research participant shared that she self-identified as a natural introvert. Furthermore, Diana stated that she set the goal and put her strongest effort in developing those highly attractive and appreciated by her surroundings teacher qualities. Moreover, she elaborated and steadily implemented her very specific teaching style solely for professional use at school. Mrs. Smith confessed in her conversation with me that she consciously and strictly filtered the verbal and non-verbal texts, which she allowed herself to externalize when in her classroom or elsewhere at her school when surrounded by her students, colleagues, or other community members. Other than that, as per Diana's words, she did not employ her charismatic communication style either in public or in her home. With this knowledge, it is important to understand that large populations of educators might follow my research participant's example and start filtering and controlling their exterior behaviors in a similar way Diana did in her classroom and at her school.

The major finding of my study correlates with the ones by the other researchers who developed the fields of semiotic and social semiotics (i.e., Frank & Jewitt, 2001; Kress, 2001, 2011; Van Leeuwen, 2005) and the fields of charismatic and highly effective teaching styles (e.g., Archer, 1994; Bain, 2004). Yet, the novelty of this current research findings is in this study's major implication, which reads: educators might set the objective to develop charismatic teaching style and start working towards achieving their goals. These objectives might be achieved via fostering in self a combination of best teaching practices and most valued by students personal and interpersonal communication qualities. Having reached mastery level, these teachers might make a strong impact on individual learners, whole classrooms, or entire school culture. In agreement with Vološinov's (1973) social semiotics theory, students, as well as school communities, might benefit and achieve significantly higher when positively affected by the teachers' charismatic verbal and non-verbal language and highly attractive and appreciated charismatic teaching style.

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Author Note

Dr. Olga Gould-Yakovleva is an Assistant Professor of Reading at Eastern New Mexico University in the United States of America. She earned her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with concentration in Reading/Literacy from the State University of New York, University at Buffalo, USA. Prior to that, she earned her M.Ed. from Florida Atlantic University, USA. Dr. Gould-Yakovleva initially had her Dual Bachelor's and Dual Master's degrees in teaching ESOL and Foreign Languages. This Florida State Certified Educator (2008–2028) has had her life-long K-12 and university/college teaching experiences in the United States and internationally. Among Dr. Gould-Yakovleva's interests are such fields as Educational Research, Qualitative Methods, Teacher Education, Multimodality, Teaching Reading & Writing, Children's, and Adolescent Literature, Teaching Multicultural and International Students, Poverty Reduction through Education, etc. Please direct correspondence to olgagoul@buffalo.edu

Acknowledgements: As the final chord in this ode to the charismatic teaching style, I would like to add some quotes from the focus research participant, the veteran teacher Mrs. Diana Smith (pseudonym). Let these words sound like a covenant to generations of practicing teachers. Firmly and genuinely, Diana assured:

I would never allow anything to happen to your child that I would not allow to happen to my child.

I happened to have come from a life that wasn't easy: I grew up with adoptive parents, both of whom were highly educated Ph.D. and drunks. I lost my daughter due to an illness and one of my sons due to suicide, so... I know where these kids are coming from.

I learned very early in life that humor can defuse anything. You can learn so much better when you are laughing. When you corner the kids, they must fight back. They must. But when I made them laugh, I knew I've got them.

I say to my student-teachers, "You have just to be you. Do what you can do best. And if you do not like what you are doing, get the heck out of it."

I come to school happy, I go home happy. It is the way I am.

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