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**CORRELATION STUDY BETWEEN SELF-CONCEPT
AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT
AT SECONDARY SCHOOL**

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the Magister Degree in Applied Linguistics and language Teaching.
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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to all those who by their supportive and positive attitudes, encouragements and trust, succeed in inspiring others and changing lives. Those people who open doors and bring hope when others do just the opposite.

I want to dedicate this work exclusively to Mr Nemouchi who stood by me in what was a decisive moment of my career, and to my dear husband who brought happiness and joy to my life.

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ABSTRACT

Recent research findings assert the importance of the psychological components in learning with an increasing focus on the role of personality variables such as self-concept to improve academic outcomes. The literature shows that effective learning begins with promoting students' self-concept, a key ingredient for cultivating autonomous and successful learners. Within this scope, this research attempts to answer a number of questions relevant to the role of teachers and school environment in promoting self concept in order to get better achievement in the general secondary school course and the English language course among a sample of secondary school learners. However, how many of our students can not ask us for help when they have difficulties? How many of them can not talk in front of a group and sacrifice their chance of learning for fear of being judged or laughed at? How many of them do not even try, just because they are persuaded that they can not? The question to be asked then is, "what do schools and teachers do or not do that leaves our students with such a damaged self-concept?" It is hypothesized, in this study, that when learners display a positive self-concept, their general academic achievement will be satisfactory and they will reach satisfactory foreign language (English) performance. Data gathering tools- a questionnaire and achievement grades in the general course and the English course- provide significant results to draw a correlation between the different variables of the study and confirm the hypothesis. The study determines the need to raise awareness about the importance of self-concept in the learning process and in the learning of foreign languages, to help both teachers and parents win the battle against the challenges they face: high dropout rate, low academic achievement, lack of motivation and low academic self-concept, as the undeniable fact is that every child has the ability to learn and be successful if the right environment is provided.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

asc: Academic self-concept

EGrade: English Grade

esc: Emotional self-concept

FL: Foreign Language

FLA: Foreign Language Acquisition

GGrade: General Grade

GPA: Grade point average

SL: Second Language

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

ssc: Social self-concept

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INTRODUCTION

Academic achievement has always been the core interest of educationists and educational psychologists. If governments invest both money and efforts to provide our educational system with the appropriate curricula, teachers, and educational specialists; it is certainly to help learners achieve satisfactory academic outcomes. However, underachievers have and will always exist. Though academic failure can be attributed to a multitude of external factors such as social, economic, and relational variables, there is no doubt about the importance of internal factors in shaping academic achievement. Thus, psychological research has shown growing interest in the study of self-terms among them the self-concept and related constructs such as: self-esteem, self-confidence, motivation and many other self related issues.

1. Statement of the problem and scope of the study

Research findings have been applied to the field of education, for a better understanding of the learning mechanisms to overcome learning difficulties and to improve academic achievement. Studies in the field concluded that how individuals view themselves is related to how they behave as learners. There will be little learning if students behave in a passive manner. In other words, Individuals with low academic self-concept show low commitment to school. Whereas when students perceive that they can pursue their own goals, that they have aptitudes and ability to perform, they will invest more effort, work harder, and strive to attain higher levels of academic achievement.

The problem under investigation is to explore the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement in general, as well as self-concept and English as a foreign language in particular. Moreover, this research work aims at illustrating how academic outcomes are influenced by students' beliefs and attitudes about school and foreign language learning. Finally, it will suggest potential strategies for students, teachers and parents to manipulate and change students' self-concept in order to improve their scholastic outcomes in English and foreign languages in general.

2. Objectives of the study

The aim of this research work is to run a correlation study between self-concept and academic achievement to:

- Determine the importance of self-concept in the learning process.
- Shed light on how self-concept can influence academic achievement in general and the acquisition of English as a foreign language in particular.
- Raise student's awareness about their own abilities, and how their mental strength and positive self-concept can lead them to succeed in school and in the foreign language classroom.
- Raise both teachers and parents' consciousness, about the tremendous role they play in promoting student's self-concept for higher scholastic achievement.

In sum, this study is intended to provide educators, parents and students with a deeper insight and a better understanding of the importance of intrinsic variables such as *self-concept*, in providing and sustaining academic achievement in general and in foreign

languages (English) in particular . The study will also attempt to clarify the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement in order to uncover motivational interventions that could be used to enhance scholastic success in the foreign language classroom. This study is expected to have implications for curricular changes, as well as changes in learning strategies and teaching policies to reach higher academic achievement.

3. Definition of terms

SELF: Psychological entity that is the subject of a person's experience distinct from others. It is a sense of who we are.

SELF-CONCEPT: A nucleus of one's personality structure. A system of beliefs, perceptions and attitudes one holds true about himself.

SELF –ESTEEM: Evaluative and judgmental attitudes and feelings we have about ourselves. Self-esteem can be high or low.

SELF CONFIDENCE: It is the sense of unquestioning acceptability of our potential as well as limitations. It is the belief in our ability to accomplish tasks and perform roles.

SELF-EFFICACY: It is the ability to successfully perform a particular task through displaying the appropriate behavior characteristic of perseverance and resilience.

MOTIVATION: It is the intrinsic or extrinsic incentives or desires that arouse, drive and maintain behavior in whatever domain.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT: The evaluation of students' outcomes in a given subject i.e. students grades in a subject matter.

4. Hypotheses

The objective of the study is to establish the correlation between self-concept and academic achievement in general and self-concept and foreign language performance (English) in particular. So, we would expect two hypotheses to be tested, however, the self-concept scale is multidimensional and comprises three distinct subscales: emotional self-concept (self-esteem), academic self-concept and social self concept. Thus, the research work will test a total of six hypotheses which are as follows:

HYPOTHESIS I

“When learners display a positive emotional self-concept, they will reach satisfactory foreign language (English) performance”.

Independent variable: Emotional self concept

Dependent variable: Foreign language performance

HYPOTHESIS II

“When learners display a positive emotional self-concept, their general academic achievement will be satisfactory”.

Independent variable: Emotional self concept

Dependent variable: General academic achievement

HYPOTHESIS III

“When learners have a positive academic self concept in learning foreign languages (English), their achievement will be higher”.

Independent variable: Academic self concept

Dependent variable: Foreign language achievement

HYPOTHESIS IV

“When learners have a positive academic self concept, their general academic achievement will be higher”.

Independent variable: Academic self concept

Dependent variable: General academic achievement

HYPOTHESIS V

“When learners have a positive social self concept their academic achievement will be higher”.

Independent variable: Social self-concept

Dependent variable: General academic achievement

HYPOTHESIS VI

“When learners have a positive social self concept, their foreign languages (English) achievement will be higher”.

Independent variable: Social self concept

Dependent variable: Foreign language achievement

5. Research tools and method

To investigate such a research question, that is, to establish the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement as well as to verify the degree of correlation and prediction between them, we deemed it appropriate to adopt both descriptive and correlation studies for the sake of identifying, describing and gathering detailed information about self-concept (through a questionnaire administered to the students). We also gathered data about students' scholastic performance (through the collection of their average grade of the tests and exams administered by their teachers throughout the academic year). Both average general grades of all subjects and average English grades were collected.

The method includes both qualitative and quantitative data, fundamental ingredients to establish the correlation between the two variables (self-concept and academic achievement). The sample is formed of groups of 100 students (my own students) from second and third year classes of SAHAD MBAREK Secondary School of AL HAMMADIA (Bordj Bou Arreridj). The age of the students ranges from 16 to 20 among them 49 girls and 51 boys.

6. Organization of the study

The study is presented in four chapters. The chapters are preceded by an introduction to the research work which includes: statement of the problem, objective of the study, definitions of terms, statement of hypotheses, methodology and tools of the research and finally organization of the study.

Chapter one provides a review of literature as it relates to the self-concept and socio-affective factors. It includes the following points: Brief history of the self, definitions of self-concept and other related constructs such as self-esteem, self-confidence, self efficacy and motivation.

Chapter Two covers a review of literature pertaining the academic self-concept and academic achievement including learning and academic achievement, foreign language learning as well as a correlation between self-concept and academic achievement and self-concept and foreign language performance.

Chapter Three discusses the methodology of the research study including the selection of the sample and the method of data collection, the tools and the population characteristics. The study considers data collected through a questionnaire administered to the students, as well as their average grades in English obtained from the tests and exams that have been assigned during the academic year 2006-2007. This chapter includes also the presentation of the data and a statistical analysis of the information collected throughout the study and an interpretation of this analysis.

Finally, Chapter Four concludes the research study by presenting the strategies of self-concept enhancement and offering pedagogical implementations and recommendations for improving academic achievements and foreign language classrooms. It also lists the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER ONE

SELF-CONCEPT AND SOCIO-AFFECTIVE FACTORS IN LEARNING

Introduction

Discussions about the self have been of interest to philosophers and psychologists for over 2000 years. In order to understand present day notion of self and self-concept, it is important to refer to some of the major philosophical and psychological theories of the self over history, and identify how they have enriched this construct. Findings about the self and self-concept lead certainly to the discussion of related matters like motivation and other cognitive and meta cognitive aspects. This chapter starts with a brief history of the self construct which shows how the term originated, and how it was used throughout the literature. In the second section, the various definitions of self concept are presented. The third section deals with the different self terms that have been used inconsistently and interchangeably with self concept which led to ambiguity and lack of clarity of the theoretical perspective. The fourth and the last section deals with motivation, its relation to self-concept and the different underlying approaches.

1. Brief history of the self

Interest in the self can be traced back to early philosophers such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Socrates argued that the self is the soul. Plato, on the other hand focused on the intellect and the rational part of the soul, where he tied the notion of the self to cognitive principles. Aristotle however, rejected Plato's rationalism claiming that the mind is higher than the soul, and that the mind is an independent substance implicated within the soul (Hattie, 1992).

Self-concept has been a focal point in psychoanalysis, ego psychology, personality research, sociology and experimental social psychology since the pioneering work of James (1890), Cooley (1902), Freud (1923), and Mead (1934). However, their theoretical perspectives have been inaccurate, and sometimes contradictory in the use of 'self' related terms, that entered everyday usage without agreement on a single consistent definition. As a reaction to this inconsistency, a number of review books and articles have been written by Wylie 1974, 1979; Wells and Marwel 1976; Dickstein 1977; Bean, Lipka and Ludewig 1980 and many others (Blyth & Traeger,1983).

The concept of self has always been given considerable attention, and many have been using it interchangeably with terms such as spirit, psyche or soul to refer to self. A turning point in man's thinking about his non-physical-being came in 1644 when Descartes formulated his *cogito ergo sum* that if one doubts, one thinks, and that if one thinks, one must exist. Many other philosophers of this period such as Spinoza and Leibniz used terms such as mind, soul and self. Sigmund Freud's introduction and emphasis on the self was introduced through the concept of ego development and functioning. While Freudian psychologists explored consciousness, the Gestaltists focused on the value of insight. However, with the behaviorist trend, the focus shifted to only measurable and observable behavior and thus, gave little attention to the self. Since psychological theories have always influenced education, when psychology abandoned the self so did education. Nevertheless, some notable exceptions include Mead (1934), Lewin (1935), Goldstein (1939), Maslow (1954-1956), Lecky (1845), and others who all gave the self due attention (Purkey, 1970).

The current interest in self-perceptions can be traced back to the work of William James 1890, who introduced a theory of self through personal introspection and observation of other's behavior, and who divided the self into material, social and spiritual selves that all interact in a dynamic to reach self-preservation and self enhancement. Beame and Lipka referred to Cooley (1902), Mead (1934), Sullivan (1953) and Rosenberg (1979) who all contributed significantly in highlighting the notion of self. Cooley defined the self in function of the feedback from others. Mead argued that self perception is developed in a context of social interaction that is multidimensional and hierarchical and Sullivan, introduced the idea that individuals are more influenced by feedback from some persons, than from others which he labeled as “significant others” (Beame & Lipka, 1986).

After the concept of the self has been neglected by the behaviorists, its reintroduction to psychology and education is due to the humanistic movement (that emphasizes the internal world of individuals) led by Carl Rogers (1947- 1969), Combs and Snygg (1949) and many others like Brookheider (1958), Patterson (1959-1961), Combs (1965-1969) and Cooper Smith (1967) who all caused the rebirth of interest in internal and intrinsic motivating forces, and cognitive processes with reference to the dynamic importance of the self (Purkey, 1970).

However, with the humanistic movement as pointed out by Purkey (2000) there was a gap between theory and practice, and the attempt to promote realistic and positive self-perceptions became more controversial (Baldwin, 1987: 29 cited in Purkey, 2000: 34) stated that:

“Unfortunately, proponents of the human potential movement often carried the idea of personal growth to the limits of personal license, and failed to develop a disciplined and systematic examination of its assumptions and limitations” (Baldwin, 1987: 29 cited in Purkey, 2000: 34).

This led once again, to the decline of interest in the self until the cognitive revolution of the 80’s, which was influenced by the technological progress and the computer. The cognitive theorists and researchers much like their humanistic predecessors, focused on the internal mental events, but with an emphasis on the cognitive processes such as encoding and decoding human thinking, problem solving and higher order thinking which gave interest in the self a different face but an exciting insight.

In contemporary research on the self, Albert Bandura (who was a former behaviorist) comes to be the most prominent self theorist who argued that it’s the beliefs that individuals possess that enable them to control their thoughts, feelings and behaviors which all form the self-system, and that human behavior is predicted more by people’s perception of their abilities, than by what they are actually able to do. The new research topics such as self-efficacy, self-focus and all the other ‘self’ vocabulary that characterizes the theories of human motivation testifies that the study of the self is the new direction in the field of motivation (Purkey, 2000).

2. Definitions of self / self-concept

2.1. General self-concept

There has been an increasing focus on the importance of the role of personality variables in academic performance, and considerable progress has been made in documenting the positive role of self-concept beliefs, in the growth of cognitive

competences and in the influence of student's academic interest. Thus, many definitions have been provided by researchers in an attempt to clarify and understand the self-concept construct.

Comb and Snygg pointed out that the self concept is the nucleus of one's personality structure, and that changes in behavior occur only in relationship to events that have direct bearing on the self (Paschal, 1968). Carl Rogers built a theory around the importance of the self in human adjustment, in which the self is considered as the central aspect of personality and thus, to individual's behavior (Purkey, 1970). Maintenance and enhancement of the self is the fundamental drive of individual behavior, and that behavior is directed by the totality of experience that an individual is aware of (Combs and Snygg, 1949, cited by Purkey, 1970).

Self -concept in psychology is "the composite of ideas, feelings, and attitudes people have about themselves" (Hilgard, et al, 1979: 605, cited in Woolfolk, 2004: 71). It is the attempt to explain ourselves to ourselves in terms of impressions, feelings and attitudes. However, our self-perceptions are not stable and permanent but rather changing, depending on the different situations and conditions of our lives (Woolfolk, 2004).

Jersild (1960:190, cited in Garza, 1977: 15-16) wrote that the self-concept "(..) is the development of the self as the composites of thoughts and feelings, which constitute a person's awareness of individual existence, his perception of who and what he is ...". (Jersild 1960: 190, cited in Garza, 1977: 15-16).

The self-concept is "our perceptions of ourselves = in specific terms it is our attitudes, feelings, and knowledge about our abilities, appearance, and social acceptability." (Gordon Darlene 1977, cited in Byrne, 1984: 429).

According to the various definitions of the self given by Rogers (1951), Jersild (1952), Combs and Snygg (1959), Purkey defined the self as "a complex and a dynamic system of beliefs which an individual holds true about himself, each belief with a corresponding value" (Purkey, 1970: 7).

Combs and Snygg (1959: 146, cited in Purkey, 1970: 10) defined the self as follows:

"(...) the self is the individual's basic frame of reference, the central core around which the remainder of the perceptual field is organized. In this sense, the phenomenal self is both a product of the individual's experience and a producer of whatever new experience he is capable of " (Combs and Snygg, 1959: 146 cited in Purkey, 1970: 10).

The self means the conscious reflection of our being or identity as a separate object from others, and that the self-concept is the cognitive or the thinking aspect of the self and generally refers to "the totality of a complex organized and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence" (Purkey, 1988 cited in Huitt, 2004: 1).

The self is both organized and dynamic. It is organized in the sense that it is a whole which is made up of subparts that are beliefs about oneself. These beliefs about oneself may be divided into categories (student, husband, American...etc) and attributes (strong,

young, pretty.....etc). The beliefs which are very close to the essence of the self are highly resistant to change, while those that are peripheral to the core of the self are unstable. Moreover, each belief in the system has either a negative or a positive value. Concerning how success and failure are generalized throughout the system, Purkey stated that Diggory (1966) found that a failure of an important and highly rated ability lowers one's self evaluation of other unrelated abilities and vice versa. The final organizational quality of the self is that it is unique much like fingerprints which make unlimited varieties of personalities. The self is also dynamic in the sense that we constantly strive to maintain, protect and enhance it (Purkey, 1970).

According to an article (the letter) by Marsh (2003), self-concept like self-efficacy, are related to self-confidence and to the belief that an individual can control certain aspects of their performance or behavior. In this article it is cited that Judge and Bono (2001) stated that individuals with a favorable self-concept will perform better on tasks and will persist in the face of difficulties. It is also referred that Marsh (1991) pointed out that the importance of self-concept lies in its contribution to accomplishment, persistence and educational decisions.

The self-concept is a multidimensional and multi-faceted construct, for example academic, social, physical or even spiritual self-concepts are all facets of one's self-concept, and the dimensions of academic self-concept may be science, math or language self-concepts (Hinkley et al, 2002). Self-concept has a hierarchical structure in the sense that the general view of the self comprises other more specific concepts including non

academic self-concept, Math self concept, artistic self concept...etc and these second level self concepts are themselves made up of more specific concepts of the self (Woolfolk , 2004).

Self-concept is the individual's own organized and conscious conception of the self, including a person's observation of the self in terms of personal targets and values, and in social interactions. It is the consciousness of a person's own existence and action (Rogers, 1965 cited in Kjaldman, 2006). The self-concept is a conceptual scheme which is a model of strategies that the person possesses, and which is based on experiences that enable individuals to interact throughout their development. These strategies focus on the individual's environment which is not only his external space, but also the social interaction that occurs within that space, where the person's experiences and observations are fixed. Moreover, self-concept is rather stable but developmental in the sense that it is not subject to frequent change however, it is flexible and adaptable to different situations and though generally stable it develops into a more complex system through years and experience (Lindeman, 1985, cited in Kjaldman, 2006).

As concerns using and creating self-beliefs Bandura explained that individuals interpret the outcomes of the behavior they engage in, then, use these interpretations to form beliefs about their own abilities, and when they engage in other behaviors in similar domains, they act in coherence with the beliefs they have created. Thus, behavior is not determined by its consequences but rather by the meaning we attribute to these consequences in relation to the self (Bandura, 1989,1994 cited in Purkey, 2000). The individual's self-system is formed of self-schemas which are defined as "cognitive

generalizations about the self, derived from past experiences, that organize and guide the processing of self-related information contained in the individual's social experiences” (Markus & Wurf, 1987:64 cited in Purkey 2000:37).

Self-concept is not innate but rather constructed by the individual, through interaction with the environment and reflecting on that interaction, which means that self concept can be changed. Self-concept consists of physical, academic, social and transpersonal self concepts (Huitt, 2004).

-The physical self-concept refers to all that is concrete such as our height, appearance and sex.

-The academic self-concept relates to how well we perform in school which itself consists of two levels: general and specific like Math and Science.

-The social self-concept on the other hand, deals with our relations to other people

-The transpersonal self concept however is related to the supernatural or to the unknown.

Hattie (1992) divided self-concept into:

- **Academic self-concept** (English, history, math)

- **Social self-concept** (peers, significant others)

- **Emotional self-concept** (emotional states)

- **Physical self-concept** (physical ability, physical appearance)

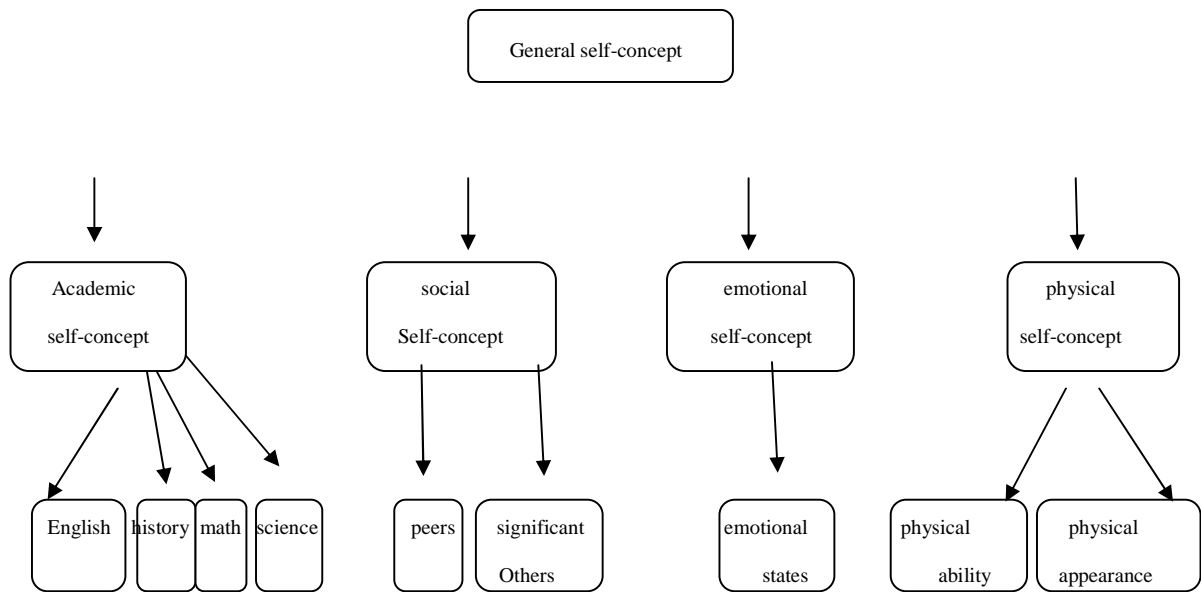


Figure 1: A hierarchical model for the organization of self-concept as suggested by Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton, 1976 cited in Hattie, 1992

2.2. Academic self-concept

Academic self concept is an important element of a more general self concept. This general or global self-concept is divided into academic and non academic self-concepts and the academic self-concept itself is divided into sub-categories such as Math, History, English and Science (Shavelson et al ,1976, cited in Corbiere et al, 2006).

Academic self-concept is defined as an overall self-perception of individuals in the academic context, it refers to self-beliefs in the academic domain including statements such as “I’m satisfied with my grades”, “I’m able to understand this”...etc (Wondimu and Bruinsma, 2006) . It is the individual’s belief of his own ability to learn the accepted types of academic behavior, and this ability includes specific self-concepts which correspond to specific subject areas in the school program, which is predictive of academic performance in the relevant area (Brookover, Thomas & Paterson,1964).

Academic self-concept is a construct that comprises cognitive, affective and behavioral components. The cognitive aspect of the student’s self-concept reflects their perceptions and beliefs about their abilities in an academic domain. The evaluative component on the other hand, known as self-esteem, reflects the student’s appraisal and emotional assessment of his/her abilities. And the behavioral aspect of student’s self-concept known as self-efficacy consists of student’s self-representation of successful performance in a particular scholastic ability domain (Dermitzaki & Efklides, 2000).

As concerns the predictors of academic self-concept, school environment is considered one of the most important, as teachers and classmates provide constantly information about the student performance. Self-concept develops through a continuous interaction with others, and the countless components of self-concept are mainly social. We attribute meanings to the acts of others and we perceive ourselves according to how others relate to us (Purkey, 1978).

The influence of the teachers on student's self-concept is of considerable importance: "The concepts which the teacher has of the children become the concepts which the children come to have of themselves" (Patterson, 1973: 125 cited in Purkey, 1978: 6).

Peer environment received due attention in the attempt of describing the factors which affect student's self-concept. '*relative deprivation*', '*environmental press*' and '*internal/external frame of reference*' are all theories that have been developed to describe the effect that peer ability level has on student's self-concept. The *relative deprivation* theory which was first elaborated by Davis (1966) assumes that a student will feel more academically confident among a relatively lower ability peer group than among a higher ability grouping. In other words, self-concept is formed by comparing oneself to others and thus, attending a highly selective school reduces one's academic self-concept. '*The environment press*' theory on the other hand, is based on the assumption that students will compare themselves to their peers taking into account their school's selectivity in comparison to other schools, and that being accepted in a highly selective school will boost their academic self-concept. While most studies attempted to support relative

deprivation theory, research led to inconsistent results either way which gave birth to another theory known as the *Internal / external frame of reference model* , which states that students will compare the abilities they have in different subjects such as math ability to verbal ability (internal), and also compare their abilities or skills with the perception of others' abilities and skills (external). This concludes that academic self-concept is influenced by both the student ability, and the peer group ability. In addition to this, other factors such as subject aspiration, school achievement and socioeconomic status all determine and affect academic self-concept (Sax, 1992).

2.3. Social self-concept

The social selves and the social aspect of the self-concept are described as the version of the self reflected in each human interaction. The self is created within a context with reference to values and norms of others who take part in that context (social contexts shape the selves). The social construction of the self depends on relationships or situations as well as on larger sociocultural and historical factors.

Cultures and societies differ on how to perceive what it means to be an individual, For example, individualistic societies believe that the self is created through personal not group achievement and that it is a distinct product that creates behavior and attitudes rather than a social and a situational product. Societies that value individualism, tend to emphasize personal autonomy and self-fulfillment while societies that value collectivism place emphasis on the individual's place within a group and the group's unique attributes, as individuals are valued because of their ability to maintain relationships and interpersonal harmony (Brewer & Hewstone, 2004).

3. Self-concept and related constructs

An increasing body of literature and research has sought to explore the nature of the different self-terms, however, the self-concept construct has been used synonymously and interchangeably in many cases with other self-terms such as self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy which led to confusion and lack of consistency in the definitions provided so far . This section attempts to clarify the distinction between some of these different self-terms and their relationship to self-concept.

3.1. Self-esteem

Self-esteem has been defined as the subset of self-descriptive behaviors that indicate self-evaluations (Obiakor & Patton, 1977 cited in Henry, 2005). It is the evaluative component of self-concept which reflects one's evaluation, including emotional assessment or appraisal of the self as a cognitive being, individual's likes and dislikes and feelings of self-acceptance (Dermitzaki & Efklides, 2000). Self- esteem is the thoughts and feelings of regard that each one has about him/ herself which can be either high or low and that the concept must rely on attributes such as one's sense of significance, attractiveness and competence (Gardner, 1992).

Self-esteem is the attitude towards the self. It includes an affective quality that simple cognitions about the self may not. It is an affective process that includes positive and negative feelings about oneself (Kernis, 1995). While self-concept is defined in terms of roles and attributes regardless of a positive or a negative connotation, self-esteem is based on values such as attitudes or beliefs. It is the evaluation one makes of the self-

concept description which can be positive, neutral or negative. Self-concept is descriptive while self-esteem is evaluative. For example, describing one's self as tall is a self-concept but being happy or unhappy about being tall is an indicator of self-esteem (Beane & Lipka, 1986). Self-concept and self esteem are distinct constructs, the former is a cognitive structure and the latter is an affective reaction. e.g.: the belief that I am a good basketball player (is a self-concept) makes me feel good about my skills and myself (is a self-esteem) i.e. having a positive evaluation of one's self is having a high self-esteem and vice versa (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002 cited in Woolfolk, 2004).

Rosenberg and Simmons (1971: 9 cited in Monk 1998: 13-14) stated that self esteem is:

“a negative or positive attitude toward oneself and the associated emotional reactions.....and that low self esteem means that the individual lacks respect for self, considers himself unworthy, inadequate, and seriously deficient as a person” (Rosenberg & Simmons, 1971: 9 cited in Monk 1998: 13-14).

Hattie (1992) stated:

“low self-esteem is believing that you are more at the mercy of the whims of others and environment, it is having less control and being less effective in engaging others, it leads to difficulties in accepting others; coping with the world and the individual's place in the world; and it makes it difficult for the individual to predict outcomes of interactions that would enhance coping more effectively next time” (Hattie, 1992: 253).

Applying Hattie's definition of low self esteem to academic environment we can assume that students with low self-esteem will attribute their failure to external factors. They will display lack of control as concerns academic outcomes, which lead to difficulties on how to cope more effectively with failure next time. As stated by Holly (1987, cited in Henry, 2005) Erikson has specifically argued that academic achievement is an integral factor in creating and maintaining a positive view of the self, and since

school values too much scholastic success, it often becomes a primary measure by which students judge themselves and their esteem. However, studies as concerns the influence of self esteem on academic achievement haven't been conclusive. Instead, research has shown that self esteem appears to be more of an effect rather than a primary cause of achievement. Individuals with high self esteem perform better after failure and persevere in face of difficulty than individual with low self esteem. However, studies show that high self-esteem does not always promote task achievement. People with high self esteem may display nonproductive task achievement or take excessive and unrealistic risk and set unrealistic goals and thus, overestimate their abilities .i.e. people are successful and efficient only if they evaluate themselves accurately (Kernis, 1995).

3.2. Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is the beliefs individuals hold about their capabilities that are predictive of how they behave. These self-efficacy beliefs help determine the amount of effort displayed on an activity, the degree of their perseverance in front of obstacles and how much resilient they will be (Bandura, 1986 cited in Pajares & Schunk 2001). Self-efficacy beliefs are judgments and expectations about behavioral skills and abilities, for psychological adjustment to cope successfully with environmental demand and challenges (Maddux, 1995). It is the ability to regulate, change and develop our thinking and beliefs through a process of conscious awareness. Self-efficacy manifests itself as psychological well-being including self-confidence and healthy self-esteem (Derrington & Goddard, 2008).

Self-efficacy judgments determine the activities to be undertaken and those to be avoided, how much effort individuals will expend, and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles. The stronger self-efficacy is, the harder individuals will try to accomplish a task, and less likely to give up in front of difficulties (Bandura, 1986 cited in Alderman, 1999).

Self-efficacy is an important aspect of self-concept; however, it is neither self-concept that is beliefs about ourselves, nor self-esteem that is how we feel about those beliefs. It is concerned rather with people's beliefs about personal control. It is related to one's competencies, and the ability to exercise those competencies in certain domains and situations, and not only performing trivial motor acts but to coordinate and orchestrate skills. It is the ability to change and challenge situations, and how well one can mobilize one's resources to accomplish goals (Leary & Tangney, 2003).

The difference between self-concept and self-efficacy is that while self-concept refers to a generalized self-assessment including self-reactions and beliefs of competence, self-efficacy are context specific beliefs of one's ability to organize, and perform specific tasks or activities to reach a given goal rather than a more global assessment of how good you are at something (Pajares and Urdan, 2006).

In that respect, self-efficacy is future oriented; it emphasizes our ability to perform a particular task in a successful way with no need for comparisons (March, Walker & Debus, 1991 cited in Woolfolk, 2004). While self-concept has a weak predictive power,

self-efficacy is a strong predictor of behavior. It is concerned with judgment of personal abilities (Bandura, 1997 cited in Woolfolk, 2004).

As concerns self-efficacy and self-esteem, there is no direct relationship between the two constructs. For example, I may have a low self-efficacy for painting, but my self-esteem is not affected, but if my self efficacy for teaching is affected (after bad experience) my self-esteem would suffer (Woolfolk, 2004).

In the academic context self-efficacy is the self-representation of successful performance in a specific domain, and students with positive self-representation create and visualize scenarios of successful achievement (Bandura, 1986, 1989 & Schunk 1987 cited in Dermitzaki & Efklides, 2000). It is the key factor in self-regulatory strategies used by students. Students with higher self-efficacy set higher goals, use more cognitive and metacognitive strategies, and persist longer (Pintrich and De Groot, 1990, cited in Alderman, 1999).

3.3. Self-confidence

Self-confidence which is an important dimension of self-concept is the belief in our ability to perform tasks successfully, produce results and reach goals (Dornyei, 1994). It is the unquestioning presumption of our fundamental adequacy to survive, the assured sense of our own acceptability (both our potential and limitations) and the belief in our ability to fulfill a particular role in life, and the unrealistic self-doubt doesn't undermine our efforts at success (Taubman, 1994).

As concerns the impact of self-confidence on success and failure Renchler (1992) stated that individuals perceive their success or failure according to the level of their self-confidence, that self confidence is established in the early stages of a person's development, and it is shaped to a large extent by the significant others. Moreover, Pajares and Schunk (2001) argued that confident individuals anticipate successful outcomes, and approach difficult tasks as challenges to master rather than threats to avoid.

Most societies value self-confidence as a key asset to personal success because it enhances individuals' motivation to undertake projects, and strive to reach their ambitious goals despite the difficulties they may encounter, which constitutes a fundamental incentive to build up and maintain their self-esteem. However, though research asserted the importance of high self-confidence in producing successful outcomes, it also stated that it can be self-deceptive when individuals tend to give a biased interpretation of their previous performances, and overestimate their abilities believing themselves to be more able than they actually are (Benabou & Tirole, 2002).

4. Motivation and self-concept

Often students who repeatedly fail at school are unmotivated because they generally tend to deny, or minimize any positive aims for exerting effort to learn. They avoid academic challenges, fail to engage in learning tasks, and display low level of effort and perseverance. Thus, researchers have always been focusing on the study of motivation to provide the basis for strategies to foster this construct for all levels of students' performance, as well as clarifying its relationship with the different self-terms.

Motivation is an important component in developing children's resiliency, which is the ability to move forward successfully despite the adverse circumstances in which one may grow up (Gordon et al, 1994 cited in Alderman, 1999). Optimum motivation provides optimum intellectual development (Nicholls ,1979, cited in Alderman, 1999). Motivation plays an important role in developing mental abilities. "motivational factors determine not just the goals toward which people aspire, but the way in which they seek out, process and use information " (Collier, 1994, cited in Alderman, 1999: 8).

According to Alderman (1999) motivation has three psychological functions:

- 1- Energizing or activating behavior.
- 2- Directing behavior (why we do something before another).
- 3- Regulating persistence of behavior (why we strive for achieving goals).

Achievement motivation has been given a particular attention from educational and developmental psychologists. It refers to motivation in situations where individual's competence is an issue. It tries to explain people's choice of achievement tasks, the quality of task engagement and persistence on those tasks (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002).

Klose (2008: 12) stated that.

“Achievement motivation is influenced by those factors that affect student's perceptions of their relationship to the achievement setting (e.g. the classroom). Several internal and external factors contribute to the student's motivational orientation in the classroom. These include organizing the relationship between effort and ability, understanding the classroom reward structures, balancing academic mastery and social competence, and choosing tasks of appropriate difficulty” (Klose 2008: 12).

The conceptions students have about these factors change over time, young children in primary grades are intrinsically motivated to achieve more competence, while children in later grades and adolescents are more extrinsically motivated, this shift in motivational orientations is caused by the need to reach academic competencies, to display the expected behavior, or to protect one's sense of self-worth.

Motivation is a need or a deep seated urges that push us to behave the way we do (Stapleton, 2001). And there are three approaches to motivation that we describe below:

4.1. The psychological approach

It focuses on the basic biological survival needs (hunger, thirst, shelter...etc) which has offered a little to the world of education and to the notion of arousal which affects our educational performance in both a positive and a negative way.

4.2. The cognitive approach

It is concerned with what and how we think about our behavior and how we achieve our goals. Motivation is a cognitive representation (i.e. thoughts, wishes, desires) and we motivate ourselves by visualizing the desired outcomes, and then direct our behavior towards achieving those outcomes.

4.3. The humanistic approach

It focuses on the notions of intrinsic (motives from inside and goals set by the individual) and extrinsic (motives coming from outside) motivations. Wondinu (2006) stated that Kimberly A Noels, Richard Clement Luc G. Pelletier (1999), Deci and Ryan's

(1985) defined intrinsic motivation as activities we perform simply for the satisfaction and the pleasure that accompany the action i.e. without any rewards or external constraints, while extrinsically motivated behavior is when we perform actions not for an inherent interest in the activity but because of external reasons.

Intrinsic motivation entails exploration, curiosity and interest in our environment. It is performed out of interest and emanates from our integrated sense of self, free from demands, constraints, threats or urgencies. Thus, behavior is spontaneous and autonomous. Extrinsic motivation on the other hand does not lead to spontaneous nor autonomous behavior since it is dependent on a separable consequence, and have to be prompted by external factors (Kernis, 1995). Kernis defined four types of extrinsic regulations:

- 1- ***External regulation*** describes intentional but not internalized behaviors that are fully dependent on external contingencies such as to attain reward or avoid punishment.
- 2- ***Introjected regulation*** refers to behaviors that result from introjected regulations which means that it is internal to the person because it does not need external prompt, but still external to the individual sense of self such as when we behave because we think that we should or because we feel guilty if we don't.
- 3- ***Identified regulation*** occurs when the behavior is considered personally valuable, and important such as when we value an activity and thus, we began to incorporate it into our sense of self.

4- *Integrated regulation* refers to a total integration of extrinsic regulatory process (values and regulations) into one's coherent sense of self. It is the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation and constitutes the basis for self-determined functioning.

Another important aspect of motivation lays in attribution theory, which is the explanation and evaluation of our behavior, and the behavior of others (Georgiou, 1999 cited in Stapleton, 2001). Attribution theories of motivation describe how individual's justifications, explanations and excuses influence both their motivation and behavior (Woolfolk, 2004). Attribution theory is a cognitive theory of motivation based on the need to explain the occurrence of events (Weiner, 1992 cited in Alice, 2002).

The reasons individuals attribute to their success and failure, determine their expectations and behavior which will shape their future success and failure (Alice, 2002). There are three dimensions of attributions: *locus, stability, and controllability*.

- 1- *locus* is described according to factors within a person like ability, or factors outside the person like luck. Locus of control as it was first introduced by Rotter in 1966 refers to whether or not we perceive ourselves in control of our destiny. If we do, we have an internal locus of control and if we don't we have an external locus.
- 2- *stability* refers to the consistency of a cause over time otherwise it is unstable.
- 3- *controllability* refers to the extent a person has control over the performance outcome like effort as opposed to luck. Moreover, antecedents of attributions are important aspects to attribution theory because prior performance history influences how the students view their current performance (Stapleton, 2001).

As long as the learning process is concerned self attribution theory is concerned with individuals making causal reasons for the outcomes of their actions, which means that students attributing their academic achievement to their persistence and effort will demonstrate high academic performance. Nevertheless, students' persistence and self-attribution beliefs are influenced by their perception of the school environment and the classroom experience (Schunk, 1983 cited in Darlene, 1997). High academic self-concept students attribute their success to stable and internal factors, which may lead to satisfactory performance and thus, build higher academic self-concept and further striving for achievement. Whereas students with poor academic self-concept, most of the time attribute their success to unstable and external factors, and their failure to lack of ability and thus lack of motivation to strive for achievement (McInerney, 1999; cited in Tabassam & Grainger, 2002).

Motivation is highly related to cognition or thought processes that an individual goes through. The way people invest time and energy to accomplish a task, depends largely upon present thoughts and previous experiences i.e. people do what they believe they can do. The study of motivation starts and ends with the study of behavior and personal investment that is guided by people's choices and decisions, which are dependent on personal incentives and sense of self (Renschler, 1992).

As concerns the relationship between motivation and self-concept Franken (1994, cited in Huitt 2004: 443) said that:

“There is a great deal of research which shows that the self concept is, perhaps, the basis for all motivated behavior. It is the self-concept that gives rise to possible selves, and it is possible selves that create the motivation for behavior” (1994, cited in Huitt 2004: 443).

Studies based on self-concept theory have revealed the great impact self-perceptions have on both motivation and performance. Research studies demonstrated that self-concept significantly determines motivation, and that it is a crucial antecedent of motivation outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 1995, cited in Wondinu, 2006). Moreover, self-beliefs are of crucial importance in the field of academic motivation, and that the self is on the verge of dominating the field of motivation. Thus, students’ sense of self is a principal component of academic motivation, and that the beliefs students have about themselves play a vital role in their success or failure in school (Graham & Weiner, 1996: 77 cited in Pajares & Schunk, 2001).

Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored the theoretical foundations of the self and its relation with the socio-affective factors as well as the distinction between the different self-terms that have been used interchangeably over the last several years, and which led to ambiguity and lack of accuracy in the related literature. In the next chapter, we will continue with the theories underlying the learning styles and strategies in general and in language learning. In addition, correlation between academic self-concept and scholastic achievement and correlation between self-concept and foreign language learning will be tackled.

CHAPTER TWO

ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Introduction

This second chapter offers a theoretical perspective on the learning process that takes place in an academic setting. It also caters the different theories underlying foreign language learning in general and English as a foreign language in particular. The different teaching theories and methods used to teach English as a foreign language are presented. Academic achievement is discussed taking into consideration the different influencing variables such as gender, ethnicity, parental and teacher involvement. Then, the chapter exposes the different findings as concerns the correlation between academic self -concept and academic achievement, as well as the correlation between academic self-concept and foreign language learning (English). In all these points the role of the affective variables particularly self-concept is highlighted and explained.

1. Learning and academic achievement

1.1. Learning

Learning is a process through which experience leads to constant change in behavior or knowledge. Depending on the focal point of psychologists, some focus on the cognitive learning theories which define learning as an internal, unobservable mental activity such as: thinking, remembering and problem solving. Others emphasize the behavioral learning theories, which assume that learning leads to an observable change in

behavior caused by external events. The different behavioral theories of learning include the “*contiguity*” principle which is a process based on learning by association, and which plays a major role in a learning process known as “*classical conditioning*” (discovered by Pavlov in 1920). This process focuses on the involuntary physical or emotional responses such as fear, salivation or sweating based on the principles of: *stimulus/response*, *generalization* (responding in the same way to similar stimuli), *discrimination* (responding in a different way to similar but not identical stimuli) and *extinction* (the disappearance of the learned response). However, not all human learning is automatic and involuntary, but most of the time the behaviors are deliberate actions called ‘*operants*’ which means that we learn to behave in certain ways, as we operate on the environment which is a learning process known as ‘*operant conditioning*’ (Woolfolk, 2004).

As concerns the cognitive theory, it is known that cognitive processing where learners are involved in authentic activities in a relevant context helps promote learning (Sharon et al, 2000). Cognitive development is changes in the mental processes which become gradually more complex and sophisticated. As identified by Piaget there are four stages of cognitive development.

- 1- *The sensorimotor stage*: The earliest period of the child’s thinking, based on the senses and motor activity such as hearing, seeing, touching, moving...etc.
- 2- *The preoperational stage (early childhood)*: Where the child can use different action schemes, as long as the schemes are connected to physical actions. In this stage the child is moving towards mastering mental operations such as the ability to form and use objects (they know what each object is for).

- 3- *The concrete - operational stage (late elementary to middle school)*: The child recognizes that the physical world is stable, that elements can be transformed and changed without losing their original characteristics, and that these changes can be reversed. In this stage children understand the basics of reasoning.
- 4- *Formal operation stage (junior and senior high)*: this stage is characterized by mental tasks which involve abstract thinking and coordination. The students' thinking is marked by their egocentrism (very focused on their own ideas) and by a hypothetico-deductive reasoning (problem solving strategies in which a person identifies the cause of the problem then deduces adequate solutions). Thus, at each stage of cognitive development students are involved in the learning process (Woolfolk, 2004).

Piaget (1964:8 cited in Woolfolk, 2004: 41) stated:

“ Knowledge is not a copy of reality. To know an object, to know an event, is not to simply look at it and make a mental copy or image of it. To know an object is to act on it. To know is to modify, to transform the object, and to understand the process of this transformation, and as a consequence to understand the way the object is constructed” (Piaget, 1964:8 cited in Woolfolk, 2004: 41)

Many researchers make the distinction between the surface and the deep approach of the cognitive level of learning. With the **surface approach** (which requires low level of cognition) the student is more concerned about remembering the body of knowledge which involves rote-learning then, the recall of the learned facts such as in learning chemical tables. With the **deep approach** (high level of cognition) , however, the student deem it necessary to make meaning of the learned content so that she /he can evaluate it, and apply the knowledge to other contexts or domains. In fact, the nature of the learning

approach depends greatly on the student's perception of the learning task which is shaped by the nature of the assessment task. For example, if the learner perceives assessment as requiring just memorization and recall, then this is the approach he is going to adopt. If on the other hand, he perceives the test requirements as analyzing, explaining and evaluating then, this is exactly the approach he is going to use for the learning task (Dunn, 2004).

Lattuca (2002) however, referred to learning within a context stating that while the traditional psychological theories of learning tended to study individuals separately from context, the sociological and anthropological theories gave due attention to contexts and cultures, emphasizing the social phenomenon first then, analyzing the mental functioning of an individual. These theories claim that learning cannot be comprehended without its cultural, historical and institutional contexts which contrast with the behavioral and cognitive models that view learning as an individual activity. The sociocultural perspective which originated with Vygotsky (1988), who founded the school of psychology that called for the reformulation of psychology within a social context, explains that learning is determined by both the interaction between individuals and the cultural, social and historical context in which the interaction takes place.

1. 2. Language learning

From vocal noises and physical movements to facial expressions and speech, all are means of communication leaving creatures use to convey information. Human language on the other hand, has two distinct features which make it different and particular: its productivity and structural complexity. Language is not only a way to formulate our

thoughts, but also part of our thinking process. The study of language acquisition is like many of other academic pursuits in the attempt to explain the phenomenon. Different theoretical approaches have brought their significant contributions to clarify the process of language learning (Broughton, 1978).

According to Owens (1996: 7-9)

“language can be defined as a socially shared code or a conventional system for representing concepts through the use of arbitrary symbols and rule-governed combinations of those symbols.....Dialects are subcategories of the parent language that use similar but not identical rules..... Languages evolve, grow and change... Although most languages can be transmitted by speech, speech is not an essential feature of language. American Sign Language ... is not a mirror of American English but it is a separate language with its own rules for symbol combination” (Owens, 1996: 7-9).

Language is a social interactive tool that is generative and rule-governed. It is a code that users share to transmit ideas between them. As a complex system language can be divided into five major components illustrated as follows:

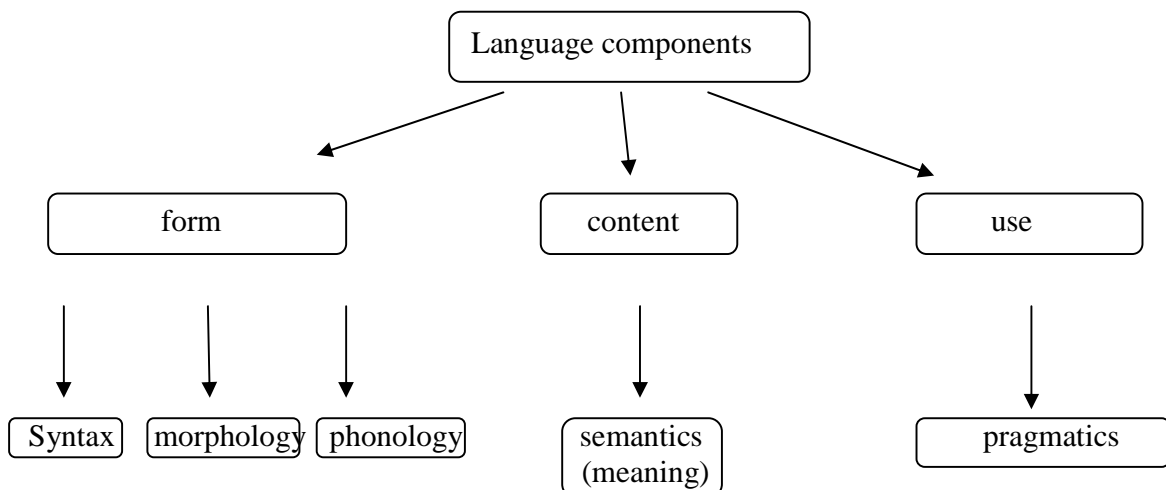


Figure 2: Language components

According to the functionalist point of view, language is a set of relationships between forms and functions, and learning a language is internalizing these relationships. The connectionist theory on the other hand, illustrates how form-function relationships are internalized and assimilated, which is believed to be the result of a consecutive experience of linkage between forms and functions. Thus, learning occurs as a result of progressive transition from deliberate efforts to automatic response. Another approach for language learning known as the input-driven theory, however, explains that learning a language is rather determined by the amount of input exposure and experience an individual goes through (Koda, 2007).

Owens (2005) pointed out that there are three predominant theories of language development which are described in the subsections below.

1.2.1. The behavioral theory

It states that language is a learned behavior, a set of associations between the stimulus and the following response (meaning and word, word and phoneme or statement and response), and that the complexity of the linguistic patterns is the result of the combination of various sequences of stimulus/response, and that both reinforcement and imitation are major components of the learning process.

1.2.2. The psycholinguistic theory

As opposed to the behavioral focus on language use, psycholinguistic theorists of the 60's (Chomsky as a leading figure) emphasized the language forms and the mental processes represented by these forms. Chomsky introduced the "*syntactic model*" in

which he described language from a psychological perspective, dealing with the ability of language users to produce and comprehend the language. He stated that a complete grammar consists of syntax, phonology, and semantics, and that syntax is the most important element because it enables to generate sentences: The deep structure of the syntactic element determines the semantic interpretation and thus, the transformational rules relate semantics to phonology. Another model "*the semantic/ cognitive model*" was introduced to focus on the importance of meaning for a full account of language and to have a generative language system, the semantic characteristics of each word should be appreciated.

As opposed to Chomsky's theories that minimized the semantic contribution to syntactic processes, **case grammar** attempted to explain the influence of semantics on the language syntactic structure, stating that deep structure consists of universal semantic concepts that determine the relation between verbs and nouns. The semanticists believed that meaning is a method to represent a mental experience, that language rules are universal rather than innate and that semantic relationships development reflects the development of cognitive structures.

A specific level of cognitive achievement is obligatory before the use of the language expressively. The semantic/cognitive theory showed that the child is unable to make the required behavioral associations argued by the earlier syntactic and behavioral theories of language acquisition without certain cognitive attainments.

1.2.3. The sociolinguistic theory

This theory emphasizes the social/ communicative functions of the language. Meaning is not in words but in the context in which the words occur, and that language acquisition is more a process of socialization that requires the comprehension of the rules of dialogue rather than those of syntax or semantics. Moreover, language is used mainly to fulfill extra linguistic ends (Haggstrom et al, 1995).

As far as language teaching and learning methods are concerned, the grammar translation and the audio-lingual methods were widely adopted because of the influence of structural linguistics and behavioral psychology in the 50's and the 60's. Unfortunately, these methods failed to provide the learners with abilities to use the foreign language outside the classroom, so the shift was to the interactive aspect of the language to develop a communicative competence. As a result, the communicative approach gained support over the last 20 years, stressing that the goal of language teaching is to use the language to perform real tasks in real world situations. However, implementing this approach in classroom is away behind theory, which led to the necessity to bridge theory and practice in foreign language teaching. In fact, there has never been enough communication between practitioners and theorists of foreign language teaching.

The 70's marked the shift to the constructivist theory that focuses on the use of thinking to communicate in social contexts, which gave birth to the communicative competence approach stressing the fact that, it is through trial, error and fluency in social

context that the communicative competence is built. In addition, this theory gave due attention to all of the grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic and discourse competences (Gonzales et al, 2006). Constructivism suggests that people achieve great understanding, when they actively construct knowledge using their prior experience as a foundation. It analyzes the process of knowing and learning as well as the factors that affect the construction of knowledge. Constructivism enfolds two theoretical perspectives:

Cognitive constructivism: was born with Piaget who assumed that new knowledge is the result of old knowledge, and that individuals learn and make sense of the new information through the process of assimilation and accommodation (Reyes & Vallone, 2008).

Vallone (2008:32) explained:

“(...) each of us has schema (or ideas) that represent what we know regarding our families, language, culture, mathematics, history and so on. When we are presented with new information, we assimilate it into our existing schema, and, if it does not fit with our preexisting knowledge structures, we accommodate or change our schematic representations” (Vallone, 2008: 32).

Social constructivism was based on the work of Vygotsky who assumed that Learning occurs through the language that flows between people. Social constructivism view individuals and the social components of learning as undissociable and that learning is constructed in a social and a cultural setting through language (Reyes & Vallone, 2008).

1.3. Foreign language learning

Foreign language studies can be traced back to the second century B.C with the teaching of Greek to foreigners (Freed, 1991). As the world has become multicultural and thus multilingual, the need for foreign language learning has been increasing to become almost an everyday activity. People learn foreign languages for a variety of reasons but unfortunately, not everyone who attempts succeeds mainly because of individual differences, and many other factors. But what exactly is a foreign language as opposed to a second language? Is the learning process the same in both cases or is it a different one? Undoubtedly understanding the concept of foreign language learning will be incomplete without reference to second language (Johnson, 2001).

Foreign language refers to the learning or teaching of a non-native language outside its original country or speech community (Stern, 1983 cited in Freed, 1991) whereas second language refers to the use of a non-native language in a speech community, where this language is traditionally used. While FL research belonged to the field of education, dealing with teaching methods and techniques as related to testing, materials and curriculum, SL was associated rather with the field of linguistics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics tackling questions such as second language acquisition strategies, theories for acquisition process, transitional stages and transfer. Moreover, SL learning context provides various opportunities for real language use while FL learning is limited to the classroom which leads to a lower proficiency as compared to SL. With these different orientations of the foreign and second language research, it may be concluded that SL and FL acquisition are two different areas of study, while in fact, they are both

related to a similar, if not an identical phenomenon which is the acquisition of a non-native language (Freed,1991).

Ellis (1986: 5 cited in Freed, 1991: 6) wrote:

“Second language acquisition is not intended to contrast with foreign language acquisition. SLA is used as a general term that embraces both untutored (“naturalistic”) acquisition and tutored (“classroom”) acquisition...” (Ellis, 1986: 5 cited in Freed, 1991:6)

If disciplines differ, it is mainly because of different professional and intellectual research goals. In SLA the focus is on research and theory (explaining and describing the phenomenon) while in FLA the focus is on curriculum and application to influence the teacher behavior and the classroom environment. Thus, FLA turns away from what and how language is learned and remains a consumer of SLA instead of being an active contributor (Vanpatten & Lee, 1990).

Vanpatten et al (1987: 1) stated:

“ Research in the context of FL has been directed almost exclusively at investigating methodology. The research question that has dominated the field has been how to manipulate teaching so that students would learn faster and retain longer” (Vanpatten et al, 1987: 1).

This assumes that how the students are taught bears direct impact on what they learn and how well they learn it. However, research proved that certain skills can still be learned without students practicing them, which leads to the assumption that FL learning

needs to be considered as a process rather than a product of instruction, to give a deeper insight on how individuals build competence in another language and the factors that influence this competence. Research found that there are numbers of non-linguistic factors that influence the success or failure of FL acquisition such as affective variables related to the learner's personality, motivation and emotions, sociocultural factors such as attitudes towards language groups, in addition to cognitive variables related to the mental processes that permit students to organize information and make sense of the environment.

The social interaction enfolded in learning another language provides not only opportunities to guide an internally driven process, but also shapes the context of learning, defines the problem to be solved, and gives a meaning to what learning is. As Vygotsky made it clear, the mind does not exist in isolation from its surrounding world but is partially formed by it (Hall, 2004).

Hall (2004: 610) stated:

“(...) the means we use to realize our activities and the relationships we form with others as we do, do not simply awaken what is already with us, enhancing an otherwise fixed course of development. Rather, they define both the substance of our development and the directions it takes” (Hall, 2004: 610).

Linguistic items such as grammar and lexicon are the ingredients of our interactional procedures, however,

“these items are not taken from sets of preexisting mental representations and inserted into these procedures as they are needed, rather, the items are given shape within the interactions themselves, emerging as regularized responses to the continuing pressure of managing our collective attention and achieving intersubjectivity in terms of what we are doing together in and through our interactions” (Hall, 2004: 610).

These interactional procedures provide deep insight on understanding foreign language learning and provide an orientation for learning by helping the students identify and repair their grammatical errors. Learners learn a new language by interacting with others. Interaction means that both psychological and socio cultural factors have an important impact on the learning process, as the learner is both an individual and a member of a group. The psychological traits permit the students to acquire the new language, as they use the assets of their personalities to internalize the cultural aspects, to process the language they hear, and to produce adequate responses. Learners approach language learning with either positive or negative emotions. Affective responses of pride, competence and enjoyment are created as they master the language. Hence, the role of teachers is paramount in enhancing the learning process by helping the students to be aware of those psychological factors (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2006).

1.4. English as a foreign language

Language learning theories are rather social-psychological in nature, and learning a foreign language has a social aspect which consists of adopting a new cultural identity and a new way of communicating (Williams et al, 2002). English has been taught as a second or foreign language since the 15 th century. The expansion of the British Empire in the 16 th century asserted the importance of English language, and the majority of the teachers were nonnative speakers who were immigrants or refugees from European countries. According to the British Council, there are 750 million speakers of English as a foreign language in the world taught mostly by teachers who learned English as a foreign or a second language in their own countries (Braine, 2005).

Colonialism was a major factor in the spread of English worldwide, as colonizers exerted great power to impose English as a form of linguistic imperialism, maintained by the establishment of structural (institutions and financial allocations) and cultural (attitudes and pedagogic principles) inequalities between English and other languages. Moreover, in addition to the role of economic, educational and mass media incentives, for many people English has become a language of power, knowledge and personal success as it is the main language of science, technology, business, medicine, books and music (Mckay & Heng, 2008). There are millions of people on different continents who are learning English not just for international reasons, but for their own specific purposes that are national and local since in many non- English countries, English has integrated T.V programs, business, education, leisure and tourism (Kalaja et al, 2008).

Globalization made the spread of English worldwide. In many countries where English has the status of a foreign language, it has been introduced as a compulsory subject from the early grades in primary school, however, overcrowded classrooms, ill-equipped teaching environment and even shortage of textbooks remain great challenges (Kam & Wong, 2004). The teaching of English as a foreign language in many of the developing countries is far from being ideal. Class size is often very large, English is taught more as an academic subject rather than a medium of active communication. Teaching is teacher centered, and gives little opportunity to an active participation on the part of the students. Educational policies and practices are over centralized and the system inflexible to encourage any pragmatic or innovative deviation which offers little communicative ability in English (Ravi Sheorey, 2006).

Concerning learning English in the secondary school, some would say that it is not self-evident because students feel less commitment and unmotivated especially when the wrong language is taught for the wrong students, for a wrong period of time and in the wrong size of class. And so neither the teachers nor the students are to be blamed for the failure of the system to produce fluent English speakers. Nevertheless, the teachers are perfectly able to make the best of the situation they usually face by making their teaching appropriate, organized and exciting (Ravi Sheorey, 2006).

In many parts of the world English is taught in schools as a foreign language but it is not part of the national or social life thus, school learners have an educational function while the older learners have a rather instrumental motivation such as reading an English newspaper, visiting an English speaking country and communicating with its people. The role of English in different societies however, is influenced by historical, cultural, geographical and political factors (Broughton et al, 1978).

Students go through five stages when they learn English as a new language:

- 1- ***The preproduction stage*** where the focus is on listening with little or no use of English.
- 2- ***The early production stage*** where the students start using the learnt vocabulary in one or two word phrases.
- 3- ***The speech emergence stage*** in which the students start responding in sentences.
- 4- ***The intermediate fluency stage*** where students produce connected narrative and engage in conversations and finally

5- *The advanced stage* where the students exhibit the ability to use oral and written English that is more likely close to the language of the native speakers.

English students will acquire the language through these five stages as long as they receive the needed comprehensible input (Krashen & Terrell, 1983 cited in Lamie, 2005).

Teaching English as a foreign language has been influenced by the various psychological movements which gave birth to variety of educational approaches and methods of teaching. The grammar-translation as well as the direct and the audio-lingual approaches are all embedded in a behaviorist framework, which views language learning as a unified system of rule-governed structures learned through habit formation. The grammar-translation approach was the first one used to teach English as a foreign language through translation from the target language to the mother tongue and vice versa, intensive memorization of vocabulary, grammatical rules and conjugation were emphasized. As this approach gave little opportunity to practice the target language and taught more about the language rather than how to use it, the direct approach emerged on the rational that learning another language should be in the way children acquire their mother tongue and thus, extensive exposure to the target language was adopted with no focus on translation and grammar, instead, oral dialogues and conversations received due attention. However, when the focus on habit formation perspective of language learning shifted to the stimulus response associations, a new approach -known as audio lingual- flourished by emphasizing learning through dialogues, making use of mimicry and memorization. Grammar was taught inductively, and error-free pronunciation was

focused through the use of audio tapes, language laboratories and computers. Unfortunately, these approaches failed to produce fluent speakers of the FL. Following a constructivist perspective both the communicative competence approach in 1970's and the conceptual learning approach in the late 70's were adopted to teach English as a foreign language (Gonzalez et al, 2006).

The communicative competence shifted the focus to fluency which was believed to be reached through trial and error in the target language. The ultimate aim is to communicate in social contexts emphasizing the cultural and the socio cultural knowledge. The focus is on authentic events, integrated language (teaching the four skills together), and group work. The conceptual approach on the other hand, explains the acquisition of a foreign language through cognitive strategies such as translation, deduction and repetition (how to learn), meta cognitive strategies such as monitoring, selective attention, self-management and self-evaluation (how to think), and social-affective learning strategies such as cooperation, overgeneralization, questioning, false concept hypotheses...etc (Gonzalez et al, 2006).

The communicative competence as explained by Rothenburg and Fisher (2007), which has been introduced by Hymes (1972) refers to the ability to know how, when, and where to use the language in different social contexts. However, communicative competence comprises four different components:

Grammatical competence is the accuracy, with which we use the language (vocabulary, sentence formation, spelling and pronunciation).

Sociolinguistic competence is the ability to use the appropriate language depending on the sociolinguistic context, the social status of the participants and the aim of the interaction.

Discourse competence is the logical organization of our thoughts when we communicate (combination and connection of utterances) which differs according to different disciplines and cultures.

Strategic competence refers to the ability to manipulate language (verbal and non-verbal) to clarify meaning whenever there is a breakdown in communication through the use of paraphrasing, gestures or varying the tone and the volume of voice to enhance the effectiveness of communication.

Thus, practicing the language in authentic situations along with explicit instructions is a prerequisite to reach such competencies in English. Moreover, students should be exposed to language throughout the entire day integrating it with content learning which offers various opportunities to practice the language as the few hours allocated per week are far from being enough to produce proficient speakers.

1.5. Academic achievement

School is the first major environment outside the home that offers opportunities for a child to learn, test his abilities, and gain respect and admiration. However, for achievement to be stimulated, students need to know what exactly are the learning steps, and the educational goals to attain. Thus, the teacher should determine the learning goals, and the proficiency level to be reached, and teaches towards these objectives because success depends largely on these factors (Covington & Beery, 1976).

Academic achievement is reflected by the execution of class work in the school environment, and it is assessed by academic tests and exams. However, because of increasing competition and less attention from the teachers, students' perceptions of academic competency decrease as students increase in age and their intrinsic approach to achievement tend to have a more extrinsic orientation (Halawah, 2006).

As stated by goal theory, students' efforts and engagement in academic tasks are mainly influenced by achievement goals that they pursue (Hardre et al, 2007). Goals refer to the purpose or reasons that the individuals have when they engage in academic tasks. The main distinction that the literature reveals is between learning goals, and performance goals. In learning goals, the focus is on personal improvement and task mastery, where students choose more challenging tasks, use effective strategies of learning, and stress the importance of effort rather than their ability when justifying their performance. In performance goals however, the focus is more on social comparison, and task outcomes such as grades, awards and other evaluations (Maehr, 1989 cited in Hardre et al, 2007). In achievement goals the distinction is made between mastery goals also labeled as learning goals and performance-avoidance goals. When students adopt mastery goals, they aim at improving their competence; they have a more constructive approach to failure since they consider it as part of the learning process, and they consider ability something they can develop. However, with performance approach or performance-avoidance goals, students believe that ability is rather stable, and failure is more of a lack of ability, which leads them to use self-handicapping strategies to avoid failure as well as rejecting other's help to hide their inabilities (Bong, 2008).

Maehr's theory of personal investment (1984) suggests that the efforts learners will invest in an activity are determined by the meaning they give to the activity, and there are three facets of meaning in achievement contexts: personal goals, sense of self, and socio cultural school contexts. The goals that affect students' behavior in the classroom are achievement goals (the reasons the students have to fulfill the learning task) and social goals (the social reasons for accomplishing class work in an academic setting). The sense of self on the other hand, is concerned with the perceptions the students have about their ability to successfully achieve an academic task (which is related to academic behavior such as effort, persistence and the use of cognitive strategies). The socio cultural context however, refers to the assumption that student's behavior and mainly adolescents is influenced by the attitudes and behaviors of their friends as best friends are source of beliefs, values and interpersonal support (Nelson & Debacker (2008).

Recent research on high school achievement and learning activities focused on motivation, cognitive processing and meta cognition (the learner's beliefs about learning and the regulation of their learning processes). Vermunt (1996) suggested that there are three types of learning activities that students use in general:

1- cognitive processing activities: are those thinking activities used to process learning contents, and make sense of new information such as relating, analyzing, applying and critical processing.

2-Affective activities cope with the feelings that emerge while learning, leading to emotional state that may influence the learning process such as motivating or judging oneself.

3-Metacognitive regulation activities aim at regulating and evaluating the cognitive and affective learning activities, which leads to learning results, examples are: diagnosing the source of difficulties and adjusting learning processes when required.

1.5.1. Gender and ethnicity differences

Academic performance is influenced both by gender and cultural differences. Stapleton stated that while girls outperform boys in specific subjects such as reading or languages, boys outperform girls in specific subjects such as math and engineering. However, saying that girls are academically outperforming boys or boys are outperforming girls across the board is misinterpreting the facts. Furthermore, students of certain ethnicities like the Chinese outperform students from other ethnicities such as black Americans and Mexicans. These differences between ethnicities and gender could be explained either biologically or according to social- psychological factors. The biological explanation argues that though research studies confirmed the difference in academic achievement between genders and different races, they also asserted that girls can achieve at a higher level both in math and engineering, and that gender differences in academic performance are cross cultural, depending on the subject matter and change over time. Moreover, the overall genetic human races differences are amazingly small and no race genes present in certain races and absent from all others have been found. Thus, one can assume that the biological explanation is rather weak. The social-psychological explanation on the other hand, includes two major factors: 1- poverty/ socio economic class factor sustains the fact that poverty has an important influence on academic achievement because poor students suffer from ill- health, absenteeism, attend poorly resourced schools and receive

little if no support at home. 2- Attitudes/ beliefs and expectations however, refers to the fact that behavior is directed by people's own expectations and what the others expect from them. Expectations not only account for gender differences but also explain cultural differences in educational performances. For example, girls nowadays outperform boys in what was traditionally classified as male subjects because of society's attitudes change towards genders (Stapleton, 2001).

1.5.2. Parental and teacher involvement

Ovando and Collier (1998: 270 cited in Diaz- Rico and Weed, 2006: 156) stated:

“ Strong parent involvement is one factor that research has shown time and time again to have positive effects on academic achievement and school attitudes” (Ovando and Collier, 1998: 270 cited in Diaz- Rico and Weed, 2006: 156).

Various studies, such as those conducted by Astone and McInaham (1991), Keith and Lichtman (1994), Singh et al (1995), and Taylor (1996) illustrated the relationship between students' academic performance and their parents' involvement (Casanova et al 2005). The attitudes and behavior of parents have greater influence on the academic performance of their children than the social class. Moreover, students with low academic achievement show lower level of support, affection and supervision in addition to higher level of conflicts with their parents (Christenson et al, 1997, cited in Casanova et al, 2005). All the studies conducted by Chapman & Boersma (1979), Entwisle & Baker (1983), Fotheringham & Creal (1980) reported that children's school performance is significantly correlated with parent's attitudes (Wang, 1996). Literature review revealed that when the parents are involved in the teaching experience of their children, they

display more interaction with them at home such as helping with homework and perceive teachers with more respect (Davis et al, 2002 cited in Henry, 2005).

As concerns the influence of teacher's behavior on student's academic achievement, it is the assumptions teachers make about their students ability, and the expectations they have about them, that have concrete effects on students' achievement, as students generally internalize their teacher's beliefs about their potential, and act accordingly.

Often, consciously or unconsciously teachers don't adopt the same behavior with different students. For example, when interacting with high-ability students, teachers tend to display non behavioral attitude such as leaning, smiling and making eye contact with them, while when they deal with low ability students, they tend to ask less challenging questions, call on them and praise them less and give them a rather brief feedback (Rothenberg & Fisher, 2007).

Teacher's expectations about their students are based on student's previous academic background and reputation, which leads to differential treatment of students, who react exactly in the way that confirms the teacher's expectations. In other words, student's perceptions of teacher's expectations shape greatly students achievements (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2006).

Raffini (1993 cited in Rothenberg and Fisher, 2007: 226) stated:

“Students rise or fall to the level of expectation of their teachers ...when teachers believe in students, students believe in themselves. When those you respect think you can, you think you can” (Raffini, 1993 cited in Rothenberg and Fisher, 2007: 226).

2. Correlation between academic self concept and academic achievement

Traditionally many educators and psychologists attributed student's academic success or failure to individual ability differences. However, in the past few decades the socio-affective factors have been reported to bear great influence on the student academic achievement. Self-concept has been demonstrated in many studies to have a direct impact on academic performance.

The way in which students view themselves and the world determines their academic achievement, as personal awareness (perception) plays an active role in determining conduct. Student's failure in basic subjects and the lack of commitment are the consequence of wrong perceptions of themselves and the world, and their difficulties in academic skills are directly related to their beliefs that they can't perform the task rather than to differences in capacity, intelligence or whatever. In other words, it is the student's attitudes that limit the level of his achievement (Purkey, 1970).

Alexander Dumas (1844 cited in Purkey, 1970: 20) said:

“A person who doubts himself is like a man who would enlist in the ranks of his enemies and bears arms against himself. He makes his failure certain by himself being the first person convinced of it” (Alexander Dumas, 1844 cited in Purkey, 1970: 20).

Moreover, numerous studies demonstrated that underachievers reported negative attitudes about themselves and immaturity of behavior. They lack self-reliance and the sense of personal worth. The child's self-concept is formed by the time he reaches school age, and his attitudes towards learning are determined by the beliefs he holds about

himself. Wattenberg and Clifford who studied kindergarten children found that children with low self-concept did not learn to read like those with high self-concept did. In every learning situation the student is risking his or her self-concept, as every accomplished task is subject to evaluation, judgment, rejection and sometimes even punishment. As a consequence, students with good deal of success in the past will risk success again, while those with long history of failure will be reluctant to risk failure again and thus, will avoid learning either by mischievous acting or just by a total withdrawal (Canfield & Wells, 1976).

Students' dissatisfaction will lead them to adopt more task-avoidance and self handicapping strategies that will negatively influence their performance (Nurm & Aunola, 2001). Research studies showed that poor readers avoid achievement because they lack a sense of personal worth and adequacy, and to avoid this feeling and suffer less, they will choose not to try. Their best defense against failure is simply to accept themselves as failures. With their low self-concept, they consider that it is better not to try than to try and fail and be humiliated (Purkey & Novak, 1996).

There is a clear association between identity status and academic success. Students with less advanced forms of identity exploration are more likely to be underachievers in high school, and do not report purposeful and well defined goals in university, whereas students with more advanced forms of identity exploration display higher confidence in their academic abilities and are in a better academic standing (Good & Adams, 2008).

Action control theory (which defines the relation between an individual, a specified goal and the necessary behavior to achieve that goal) has consistently demonstrated that beliefs of effort and ability are the strongest predictors of academic achievement, and that academic goals are the mediators between beliefs and achievement-related outcomes (Lopez David, 1999). Students who have high mastery-goal orientation, often complete tasks and develop competence in the content domain, and they are more likely to become motivated when they believe in the superiority of their performance upon their peers. Thus, academic achievement is influenced by both students' beliefs about their abilities and the mastery-goals they are setting (Shen, 2007).

Though self-concept has drawn considerable empirical studies, findings have differed depending on the dimension of the self-concept examined (emotional, social, academic...etc). Findings about the correlation between general self-concept and academic achievement have not been consistent and conclusive. However, the picture concerning the relationship between academic achievement and academic self-concept is more consistent, and it has indicated that gifted students have a very positive academic self-concept (Kelly & Jordan, 1990). Research work conducted by Pajares (1996) and Payne (1992) concluded that the correlation of academic achievement is stronger with academic self-concept than with general self-concept (Byer, 2000).

Though a positive correlation exists between self-concept and academic achievement, the accuracy of the relation is dependent upon different variables such as gender, grade level (changes over time) and socioeconomic status which all interact and

influence the correlation between the two variables (Hattie, 1992). From the first time students make contact with school, the inviting or disinviting action of school personnel mainly teachers dominates their education and deeply influences their development.

Purkey & Novak (1996: 28) stated:

“Classroom teachers are stimulus objects, attractive or repellent in their own right. By their very presence, they have a subtle but profound impact on student’s self-concept. The teacher’s task, therefore, is to behave in ways that encourage positive perceptions in students, regarding themselves and their abilities” (Purkey & Novak, 1996: 28).

Different studies demonstrated that in addition to teachers and peers, parents play an important role as well in shaping their children’s self-concept. A study conducted by Brookover exposed a group of parents to a specific training program that aimed at fostering communication with their children concerning school work. The results demonstrated that an important positive increase in students self-concept of ability and in their academic achievement (GPA) has been reported (Scheirer & Kraut,1979).

As concerns the direction of causality between academic self-concept and academic achievement, it has been argued that it is a ‘chicken egg’ question. The two variables are reciprocally related and reinforcing. In other words, improving academic self-concept will result in higher achievement and higher achievement will improve academic self-concept, thus, the teachers should aim at improving both variables simultaneously because if the focus is on just one construct without the other, then, both are more likely to suffer. Woods (1998), Dermitzaki & Efklides (2000) and Yeung & Wong (2002) all

endorsed the fact that the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement is reciprocal and interactive and that though academic self concept is an important educational outcome, it is also an important factor that leads to valued educational outcomes (Marsh et al, 2002).

Boekaerts (1995, Marsh 1994, and Pintrich & Schunk, 1996 cited in Dermitzaki & Efklides, 2000: 622) stated:

“A variety of factors are involved in the process of the mutual influence between self-concept and school performance. Many studies showed that cognitive ability and academic performance directly influence student’s self-perceptions, whereas self-concept affects performance mainly through other mediating variables such as the intention to learn, the amount and quality of effort spent during task solution and the student’s persistence”. (Boekaerts, 1995, Marsh 1994, and Pintrich & Schunk, 1996 cited in Dermitzaki & Efklides, 2000: 622)

3. Correlation between self-concept and foreign languages

Various research studies have been carried since 1950’s by Gardner and Lambert to test the hypothesis which stipulates that positive attitudes towards the foreign language lead to a high attainment in the language. This assumption has been endorsed by the different studies carried by Polsky (1969), Oller, Beca and Virgil (1977) and Oller, Hudson and Liu (1977). Literature in the field also indicates that the socio-psychological factors, and student’s attitudes towards learning a foreign language has considerable influence on language proficiency (Lori, 1990).

When the students first attend their foreign language class, they arrive with either positive or negative attitudes about the language class. Diana Bartley conducted a study where she administered a test of attitudes about foreign languages. What she found out was that attitudes of the continuing group were higher and more stable than those of the dropout group, which deteriorated significantly over time. This study demonstrated how students' perceptions and attitudes can determine their future behavior. However, this does not mean that they can't be modified and changed. Students in the foreign language class, go through cognitive and evaluative processes to form attitudes about the class which is shaped by their outcomes and the feedback of their mates and teachers. For example, when the students get low grades in the foreign language class as compared to other subjects, they will obviously react negatively to the cause of their feeling of frustration, helplessness and inadequacy and thus, will more than likely hate the foreign language class (Smith, 1971).

Ehman and Oxford (1995) found a strong correlation between the belief that one can learn languages and proficiency in reading and speaking (Sheorey, 2006). Wen and Johnson also found a strong correlation between beliefs and English performance among their Chinese students. They stated:

“Teachers and material writers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, students' pre-existing assumptions about the language learning process” (Wen & Johnson, 1997: 40 cited in Sheorey, 2006: 28).

Perceptions about language learning have a paramount influence on every aspect of the language teaching profession. An understanding of those perceptions and beliefs provides useful information for teachers to identify the strategies and remedial measures that may influence students' proficiency (Kern, 1995 cited in Sheorey, 2006).

Diaz-Rico and Weed (2006: 14) stated:

“Attitudes play a critical role in learning English. Attitudes toward self, toward language (one's own and English), toward English-speaking people (particularly peers).....affects students. (Richard Amato, 2003). One's attitude toward the self involves cognition about one's ability in general, ability to learn language, and self-esteem and its related emotions.” (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2006: 14).

The acquisition of a foreign language is determined by one's belief system which bears direct influence on the invested effort, behavior choices and task success or failure. Students' low expectations of their abilities in learning a language hinder their learning process, however, students perceptions about their abilities in foreign languages is not always accurate and is sometimes biased, either when students overestimate their abilities in learning foreign languages and become unrealistically optimistic to increase their feeling of self-worth, or when students underestimate their abilities and adopt a rather self-derogating strategies because of the lack of confidence in their foreign language performance (Daley et al, 1999).

Conclusion

Chapter Two offered a theoretical premise for the research work. From the learning processes and academic achievement to the nature of the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement, the review of literature clearly demonstrated that the two variables are positively correlated and that they are rather reciprocal. The next chapter however, will deal with the methodology of the study, including the population and the sample of the research, the research design and procedure, the instruments, data collection, data analysis and finally, the summary of the findings and conclusion.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This chapter includes the presentation of the research design and participants, as well as the explanation of the instruments and the measures used to obtain the results of the study. The methodology of the research i.e. the process and procedures used are explained in great details. The study examined the correlation between self-concept (emotional, academic, and social) and general academic achievement as well as the correlation between self-concept and English language performance. All the variables of the research work were found in the educational setting. The study dealt with high school students, of the Algerian Technical School of Al Hammadia (BBA) both second and third year classes. The students' self-concept was assessed through a multidimensional questionnaire, developed after a review of literature, and the different definitions of self-concept. Academic achievement on the other hand, was obtained by collecting the average grade of the students in all academic subjects, and the average English grade collected throughout the tests and exams administered during the academic year 2007-2008. The first section of this chapter describes the sample and the population of the study. The second section details the research design and procedure followed throughout the study. The third section refers to the instruments used to measure the self-concept and academic achievement constructs and their use for the testing of the hypothesis. The fourth section covers data collection. The fifth section presents the analysis of the data that is followed by the final section, which is the summary of the findings and

conclusion.

1. Population and sample

The population that the research was interested in is the Algerian secondary school students. The sample of the study is a convenience sample, as the students who participated in the study were my own students for the whole academic year 2007-2008, which was convenient for the collection and manipulation of the data. The sample is rather homogeneous since all the students were of the same ethnicity and the same educational background. They all studied four to five years of English as a foreign language covering basically the same programs. The participants of the study were groups of 100 students from third and second year classes of Sahad M'Barek secondary school of El Hammadia (Bordj Bou Arreridj). The age of the students ranged from 16 to 20, among them 51 males and 49 females. The students were divided as follows: two second year classes of philosophy stream of 44 students ranging between 16 and 19 years old, one class of electrical stream of 16 students between the age of 17 and 19 and one class of third year scientific stream of 40 students between 17 and 20 years old.

2. Research design and procedure

The students participated in the study on a volunteer basis. They agreed to participate, after I have explained the objective of the study and the importance of their participation. A questionnaire for students was developed after a deep review of literature about self-concept definitions and assessment. The questionnaire was administered to the students of the four classes, which is the sample of the study. The students of each class filled the questionnaires in their respective classes. The time consumed between distributing the

material, giving directions and completing the test was about an hour. After I have administered the questionnaires to the students, I stated the aim of the study, and explained that this is a set of statements intended to find out how students feel about themselves in general, and in relation to school. That it is important that they provide accurate and right answers, and that they don't have to be afraid of being judged since the questionnaires were anonymous. I also explained that there is nothing such as a wrong, right or preferable answer, and every student should provide the answers that best reflect their beliefs and feelings. Each statement was read aloud and explained in details in English, then translated into Arabic to avoid any misunderstanding or ambiguity. If the students still had difficulties, they were requested to raise their hands and ask their questions and they would be assisted by giving a word or a group of words which made it easier for them to comprehend the statements.

The students were instructed to answer all the items of the questionnaire without exception. Before the questionnaires were distributed to the students, a pilot study was carried to find out about the feasibility of the test and the time needed to complete it. This has been done with another class of mine, a third year scientific stream class of 40 students (28 females and 12 males). This helped determine the required time for the completion of the questionnaires, how much the students comprehended the statement and if any modifications were needed.

3. Instruments

As concerns the instrument used to measure the variables of the hypothesis, we used a multidimensional questionnaire to measure students self concept (emotional, academic,

and social). Students' grades however, were used to measure their academic achievement. We gathered both their average grades of all subjects and the English average grade for the academic year 2007/2008.

The questionnaire was developed to assess student's self-concept, it includes 22 items. As the self-concept scale is multidimensional it can be divided into three different subscales:

- 1- Emotional self-concept subscale
- 2- Academic self-concept subscale
- 3- Social self-concept subscale

The first seven items assess the emotional self-concept, in other words, how students evaluate and judge themselves in general as related to their qualities, attitudes and self-satisfaction. The questions include questions number 3 and 7 which require a dichotomous response (yes/no) format while the rest of the questions are ordinals.

The next eight questions (question 8 to 15) assess academic self-concept in general and in foreign languages in particular. Questions 10, 11 and 13 require a yes / no answers while questions 8, 9, 12, 14 require ordinal responses.

Finally, the last 7 questions (which all require yes / no answers) assess social self-concept which deals with how the students conceive themselves within a social context or in relation to others.

The index used to measure students' self-concept was from 0 to 2. 0 was administered to answers which indicate low self-concept; 1 was administered for moderate self-concept responses; and 2 corresponds to the answers of high self concept.

Academic achievement on the other hand was measured through the student's grades. The minimum pass average grade is 10 out of 20. Thus all the grades collected are out of 20.

4. Data collection

The questionnaire constitutes mainly the quantitative data of the study. After the students have agreed to participate in the study, the questionnaire was distributed and a detailed explanation and series of instructions were given. The students completed the questionnaires within an hour after which they were collected.

Concerning academic achievement, the students' mark sheets of the academic year 2006/2007 were used to collect their grades. The average year grades of all subjects as well as English average year grades were collected and dictated to the students to be written down on their questionnaires.

Having all the data gathered, SPSS software was used for the statistical analysis of the data after they have been entered.

5. Data analysis

5.1. Analysis of student's questionnaire

We report and analyze in this section the data collected from the questionnaire administered to the students' sample of population, which consisted of 100 informants. In here, each subsection will deal with a few questions that are related to an aspect of the research.

5.1.1. Learners' emotional self-concept evaluation

The emotional self-concept has been assessed through the first subscale of the questionnaire which consists of the first seven questions.

Question 1: "Are you satisfied with yourself ? "

It assesses students' self-satisfaction that is an evaluative aspect of self concept (self esteem). This question was asked in order to assess learners' own self-evaluation of their personal self-esteem. They had to choose either **always**, **sometimes** or **never**. The index of measurement was from **0** to **2**. The highest number that is 2 is given to the highest self-concept which is 'always' for this question, 1 is for moderate self-concept (sometimes) and 0 is for low self-concept (never). The students' answers are represented in table 1 below.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	4	4.0	4.0	4.0
	1.00	77	77.0	77.0	81.0
	2.00	19	19.0	19.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table1: Learner’s self-satisfaction evaluation

As we can see in table 1 above, a high majority representing 77% of the informants are only sometimes satisfied of themselves. However, fewer students representing 19% of the informants are always sure about themselves and a very small share of the population representing only 4% of the students are never satisfied of themselves.

Question 2: “You think that you have good qualities”

This question was asked to know whether students value themselves and think that they have good qualities or not. They had to choose one of the three answers: a lot of, some or few. As in the first question the biggest number 2 represents high self-concept (a lot of), 1 moderate (some) and 0 low self-concept (few)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	3	3.0	3.0	3.0
	1.00	51	51.0	51.0	54.0
	2.00	46	46.0	46.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: students’ evaluation of their good qualities

As represented in table 2 above, the highest percentage of the informants which is 51% think that they have some good qualities, the other 46% think that they have a lot of good qualities and only 3% of them think that they have few qualities

Question 3: “You take positive attitude toward yourself”

Question 3 was asked to find out whether the students display positive or negative attitudes towards themselves, which indicates the nature of their self-evaluation, as students who evaluate themselves positively adopt positive attitudes and vice versa. The students had to give a yes or no answer as yes (coded as 2) indicates high self-esteem and no (coded as 0) indicates low self-esteem. Students’ answers are as follows:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	22	22.0	22.0	22.0
	2.00	78	78.0	78.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: students’ attitudes evaluation

According to table 3 the high majority representing 78% of the informants answered yes (coded as 2) which means that they have positive attitudes toward themselves while only 22% of them did not think that they have positive attitudes and thus, they answered no (coded as 0).

Question 4: “you feel useful for others”

Question 4 is intended to find out how students evaluate themselves in terms of usefulness to others another aspect of their self-esteem. They had to give one of the three answers: always (2), sometimes (1), and never (0). Their answers are as follows:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	1.00	71	71.0	71.0	73.0
	2.00	27	27.0	27.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Students’ usefulness evaluation

Table 4 shows that most of the informants which represent 71% of the population think that they are sometimes useful for others. 27% think that they are always useful for others but only 2% think that they never feel useful.

Question 5 “you think that you are not good at all”

This question was intended to uncover how do students evaluate and feel about themselves in general. The question was whether they think that they are not good at all and they had to choose between always(0), sometimes(1), never(2)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	6	6.0	6.0	6.0
	1.00	82	82.0	82.0	88.0
	2.00	12	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: student's self- evaluation

Table 5 shows that 82% of the participants which is the high majority answered sometimes which means that sometimes they do have the self defeating feeling that they are not worthy and thus, not good at all which is a negative evaluation of themselves. A low percentage which is about 12% ever had this feeling and only 6% always think that they are not good at all.

Question 6 “you think that you are intelligent”

This question was asked to determine how students evaluate themselves in terms of intelligence, and if they view themselves positively or negatively; whether they think that they are very intelligent (2), quite intelligent (1), or not intelligent at all (0).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	7	7.0	7.0	7.0
	1.00	82	82.0	82.0	89.0
	2.00	11	11.0	11.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Student's intelligence evaluation

Table 6 above shows that the vast majority which constitutes 82% of the participants think that they are quite intelligent which is a positive attitude. However 11% think that they are very intelligent and as few as 7% think that they are not intelligent

Question 7: “You think that you are intelligent but you can’t do much with it”

Question 7 was asked to see if students think that they can use their intelligence effectively to solve problems. The possible answers are yes (0) which means that they think that they can’t use it effectively and no (2) which means that they can use it effectively in solving problems.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	82	82.0	82.0	82.0
	2.00	18	18.0	18.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 7: students’ evaluation of their intelligence’ effectiveness

Although table 6 shows that the vast majority thinks that they are intelligent only 18% of the participants represented in table 7 think that they can use it effectively the rest which constitutes 82% think that they can’t do much with it i.e. unable to use it effectively. As a conclusion we can say from the students’ answers that overall their self-esteem ranges from moderate to high, which we can conclude that it is quite positive.

5.1.2. Students' academic self-concept evaluation

Academic self-concept subscale comprises question 8 to question15, they all aim at assessing and measuring students' academic self-concept in general (question8- question 10) and academic self-concept in foreign languages (question 11- question15).

Question 8 “you think that your ability to learn is stable and uncontrollable or unstable and controllable?”

Question 8 was asked to know what students think about their learning abilities and whether they control them or not. If students say that their ability to learn is stable and uncontrollable, it means that they have an external locus of control, that they attribute their success and failure to external factors, and thus, don't display the necessary effort to improve their learning. This means that they have a negative self-concept about their learning abilities. If on the other hand, they answer that their ability to learn is unstable and controllable, it means that they have an internal locus of control, and believe in their abilities to change and improve their learning, in other words, they have a positive self-concept about their learning abilities.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	12	12.0	12.0	12.0
	2.00	88	88.0	88.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 8: students' perception of their learning abilities

As table 8 shows, a high majority of the participants which represent 88% of the population think that their learning abilities are unstable and controllable which means that their self-concept about their learning abilities is positive and only 12% of them have a negative self-concept about their learning abilities thinking that they can't control them and that they are stable.

Question 9: “when you plan to do something do you know that it's going to be successful or unsuccessful?”

Question 9 was asked to see whether the student undergo a task with a positive attitude believing that they will succeed in it or if they undergo it with a negative attitude believing that they will fail before even trying.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	42	42.0	97.7	97.7
	.00	1	1.0	2.3	100.0
	Total	43	43.0	100.0	
Missing	System	57	57.0		
Total		100	100.0		

Table 9: Student's attitude before undergoing a task

Table 9 shows 42% of the students answered that they think that they are going to be successful whenever they do something which is a very positive attitude and only 1% answered unsuccessful. The remaining 57% did not answer the question and thus the system recorded them as missing data.

Question 10: “Do you think that individual abilities change with hard work, study and practice?”

Question 10 is intended to find out if students believe that hard work, study and practice shape their abilities. If yes (2), they are more likely to strive and try harder to improve their abilities and performance, if the answer is no (0) it means that they are less likely to work hard and strive.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	11	11.0	11.0	11.0
	2.00	89	89.0	89.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 10: students' beliefs about their abilities

Table 10 above shows that 89% of the participants believe that their abilities are influenced by effort and hard work and only 11% think otherwise

Question 11: “Do you like foreign languages?”

This question assesses students’ academic self-concept in foreign languages, if students say that they don’t like foreign languages, they are less likely to be motivated to learn and strive for high achievement and thus, have a negative self-concept about foreign languages. If however they say yes, it means that they have a positive self-concept and they are more likely to be willing to achieve and perform in foreign languages.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	31	31.0	31.0	31.0
	2.00	69	69.0	69.0	100.0
Total		100	100.0	100.0	

Table 11: Evaluation of students’ likes of foreign languages

Table 11 above shows that 69% of the informants say that they like foreign languages while 31% say that they don’t like foreign languages

Question 12: “You think that you have aptitude to learn foreign languages”

Question 12 aims at assessing students' perceptions concerning their aptitude to learn foreign languages. As some students think that despite the fact that they love foreign

languages they don't possess the ability to learn them which is a very handicapping self-perception of ability that hinders learning. The possible answers are none (0) a self-defeating perception, some(1) which is not a high self-concept and great (2) a high self-concept.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	7	7.0	7.0	7.0
	1.00	68	68.0	68.0	75.0
	2.00	25	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 12: evaluation of students' perception of ability in learning foreign languages

Table 12 shows that only 7% think that they have no aptitude to learn foreign languages, 25% think that their aptitudes are great while the vast majority of 68 % think that they have some aptitude to learn foreign languages.

Question13: “You think that there are things in foreign languages that you can never learn even if you make the necessary effort”

Question 13 aims at uncovering the negative self-concept of students, as some students truly believe that there are things in foreign languages that they can never learn no matter how hard they try. This false and negative perception they have about their ability to learn, will prevent them from even trying and thus leads them to failure. The possible answers are Yes (0) which represents a very negative self-concept and no (2) which means a positive self-concept.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	50	50.0	50.0	50.0
	2.00	50	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 13: evaluation of student’s self-concept of ability in learning foreign languages

Table 13 shows that the sample of the study was divided in an equal manner as 50% of the students answered yes and 50% answered no, which means that half of the respondents have a positive self-concept in regards to this question and the other half has a negative self-concept.

Question 14: “you think that you have hope to be good at foreign languages”

Question14 is also related to the self-concept students have about foreign language learning and whether they have hope to be high achievers or not. The answers are great hope(2) which represents a high self-concept, little hope(1) which translates a rather low self-concept and no hope(0) which is a self defeating attitudes representing a very negative self-concept.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid .00	10	10.0	10.0	10.0
1.00	42	42.0	42.0	52.0
2.00	48	48.0	48.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table14: “Evaluation of students’ hope in learning foreign languages”

Table 14 shows that 48% of the students reported that they have great hope in doing good with foreign languages and 42% said that they had little hope which is considered a negative or low self concept. The remaining 10% reported that they have no hope what so ever to be good in foreign languages, which is a self defeating attitude that shows a very negative self-concept as concerns learning foreign languages.

Question 15: “If great hope is your answer say why”

This question was excluded from the quantitative analysis as it constitutes a qualitative data

As a conclusion we can conclude that according to the students’ answers, their academic self-concept is rather moderate. Neither high nor low.

5.1. 3. Students’ social self-concept evaluation

Question16: “Many of the unhappy things in people’s lives are partly due to bad luck”

Question16 assesses students’ social self-concept and how they perceive the social environment around them. The answers are either yes (0) which means that students attribute the unhappy things of their lives to bad luck i.e. external locus of control which means that they have a rather negative social self-concept or no (2) which means that they do not believe that the unhappy things of life are due to bad luck and attribute it to other factors.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	25	25.0	25.0	25.0
	2.00	75	75.0	75.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table16: students’ evaluation of attributing social events to external factors such as luck

Table 16 shows that most students that represent 75% of the total population do not believe that unhappy event are due to bad luck which is a rather positive attitude and only 25% of them do.

Question17: “People’s misfortunes result from the mistakes they make”

Question17 was asked to see how students explain their misfortunes and whether they attribute them to internal factors or not. The yes (2) answer means that they believe that people are responsible for the bad things that happen to them and that it is because of their mistakes. The no (0) answer means that they don’t believe so

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	16	16.0	16.0	16.0
	2.00	84	84.0	84.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 17: Students' evaluation of the way they explain bad events around them

Table 17 shows that the vast majority that is 84% of the participants, attribute peoples' misfortunes to internal factors, and think that it is the result of their mistakes, which represents a positive social self-concept and only 16% don't think so.

Question 18: "In the long run people get the respect they deserve in this world"

This question was asked to evaluate if students have a positive or negative perception of respect in a social environment and if they believe that everybody gets the respect he deserves or not. If the answer is yes, it means that they have a positive social self-concept and that their perception of others is objective. If the answer is no it means that their social self-concept is rather negative.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	17	17.0	17.0	17.0
	2.00	83	83.0	83.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 18: students' evaluation of their perception of others

Table 18 shows that the majority of the respondents that is 83% of the sample believe that people get the respect they deserve which shows their positive social self-concept, while only 17% of them think otherwise.

Question19: “Unfortunately, individuals’ worth often passes unrecognized no matter how hard they try”

This question aims at assessing students’ social self-concept and the way they perceive other’s attitudes towards them. If the answer is yes it means that students have the negative perception that no matter how hard they try others will just not value them, which translates their negative social self-concept. If the answer is no it means that they don’t believe so.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	61	61.0	61.0	61.0
	2.00	39	39.0	39.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table19: Evaluation of students’ perception of their worth

Table 19 shows that 61% of the respondents answered yes which means that they believe that individual’s worth passes unrecognized no matter how hard they try which is a negative perception of others that demonstrates a negative social self-concept. The remaining 39% however do not believe that this is the case.

Question 20: “No matter how hard you try some people just don’t like you”

Question 20 was asked to see how students perceive and interpret other’s attitudes towards them in terms of likes and dislikes and whether their perception of others is negative or positive. If the answer is yes it means that they do believe that some people just don’t like them no matter how hard they try to earn their love which is a very negative perception of others. If the answer is no it means that they do not believe that this is true.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	67	67.0	67.0	67.0
	2.00	33	33.0	33.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 20: students’ perception of others attitudes towards them

Table 20 shows that 67% of the respondents believe that some people just don’t like them no matter how hard they try which is a negative social self-concept and only 33% don’t believe that this is the case.

Question 21: “People who can’t get others to like them don’t understand how to get along with others”

Question 21 was asked to assess how students interpret their relation with others, and whether they think that they are responsible for not getting along with others or not. If the answer is yes it means that they believe that people who can’t get others to like them

don't know how to get along with them which is a positive perception since it encourage them to work on developing social skills to deal with people instead of blaming the failure of relations on others. Those who answered no do not believe that this is true.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	31	31.0	31.0	31.0
	2.00	69	69.0	69.0	100.0
		100	100.0	100.0	

Table 21: students' perception of interpersonal difficulties

Table 21 shows that 69 % of the students think that people who have problems with others, don't have the social skill to interact with other people and thus, have a positive social self-concept and the remaining 31% of them don't think that this is the case.

Question 22: "You think that teachers are unfair to students"

Question 22 was asked to see how students perceive their teachers' behavior towards them. If the answer is yes it means that the students perceive their teachers' behavior in a negative way, as they believe that teachers are unfair to students. If the answer is no it means that they don't think that their teachers are unfair towards students, and are more likely to view the relationship rather positively.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	50	50.0	50.0	50.0
	2.00	50	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 22: students' perception of teachers' behavior

Table 22 shows that the respondents were divided equally in regards to this question. 50% of them answered yes, which means that they believe that teachers are unfair to students; this represents a negative perception of their teachers that may hinder their achievement at school. The other 50% however, don't believe that teachers are unfair to students as they answered no.

5.2. Students' demographics

5.2.1. Gender

As the school where the study was carried out is coeducational, we asked our informants to indicate their gender. As table 1 below indicates, there is no much difference in the frequency counts and percentage between female and male population as they respectively represent 49% and 51%.

GENDER

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	49	49.0	49.0	49.0
	Male	51	51.0	51.0	51.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 23: Students Gender differences**5.2.2. Age****Age**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	16	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	17	15	15.0	15.0	17.0
	18	48	48.0	48.0	65.0
	19	29	29.0	29.0	94.0
	20	6	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 24: Students' age categories

Table 24 above indicates that the students' population can be grouped under five age categories of 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 years old. It can be noticed that the highest category is that of 18 years old (48%) followed by age 19 (29%) then age 17 (15%). Both age 16 and 20 represent only 8% of the sample.

5.3. Reliability

The self-concept questionnaire used in this study is a multidimensional scale that is divided into 3 subscales:

- 1- Emotional self-concept subscale: which includes the first seven items (**esc7**)
- 2- Academic self-concept subscale: which comprises question8 to question14 (**asc7**)
- 3- Social self-concept subscale: which includes question16 to question22 (**ssc7**)

We wanted to assess the reliability of the questionnaire which is called 'internal consistency' to see how well all the items hold together or measure the same thing as each other. This type of reliability is measured by a specialized correlation coefficient called 'Cronbach's Alpha' which is expected to be 0.8 or higher in order to indicate that the scale is fairly internally consistent. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of each subscale was calculated to measure the internal consistency and the results were as follows:

5.3.1. Reliability results for emotional self-concept scale (esc7)

Reliability Statistics of esc7

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.145	7

Table 25: esc7 Cronbach's Alpha

$$\text{esc7} = 0.14$$

5.3.2. Reliability results for academic self-concept scale (asc7)

Reliability Statistics of asc7

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.464	7

Table 26: asc7 Cronbach's Alpha

$$\text{asc7} = 0.46$$

5.3.3. Reliability results for social self-concept scale (ssc7)

Reliability Statistics of ssc7

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.458	7

Table 27: ssc7 Cronbach's Alpha

$$\text{ssc7} = 0.46$$

The results obtained above show that Alpha values are very low which is really unfortunate. However, after a further analysis of Cronbach's Alpha values, we found that by eliminating certain contaminating items from the scales, we could achieve a higher internal consistency. The results are as follows:

5.3.4. Reliability results for emotional self-concept scale (esc3)

Reliability Statistics of
esc(1,2,7)

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.394	3

Table 28: esc3 Cronbach's Alpha

$$\text{esc}(1,2,7) = 0.39$$

As suggested by the results of a reliability analysis, α was improved from 0.14 to 0.39 when calculated with only 3 items from the emotional self-concept sub-scale namely question 1, 2 and 7. However, it still remains low which is unfortunate.

5.3.5. Reliability results for academic self-concept scale (asc3)

Reliability Statistics of
asc(11,12,14)

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.768	3

Table 29: asc3 Cronbach's Alpha

$$\text{asc}(11,12,14) = 0.77$$

As for academic self concept scale, α was improved significantly from 0.46 to 0.77 by eliminating the contaminating items and calculating it with only 3 items: question 11, 12 and 14 which is a very acceptable value.

5.3.6. Reliability results for social self-concept scale (ssc5)

Reliability Statistics of
ssc(17 to 21)

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.542	5

Table 30: ssc5 Cronbach's Alpha

$$\text{ssc (17 to 21)} = 0.54$$

For social self-concept sub scale calculated with 5 items: question17, 18, 19, 20, and 21, α was improved from 0.46 to 0.54 which is still considered a low value unfortunately. Though α for both emotional self-concept and social self-concept sub-scales remain still low, α for academic self-concept was improved to a very respectable value. Thus, we decided to use the scales with the highest alpha values (with fewer items) to run the correlations as it is more data driven.

5.4. Correlation results

Pearson Correlation coefficient r measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. The correlation coefficient can range from -1 to +1, with -1 indicating a perfect negative correlation, +1 indicating a perfect positive correlation, and 0 indicating no correlation at all.

As a rule of thumb, correlation coefficients between .10 and .30 are considered weak, those between .30 and .70 are moderate and coefficients between .70 and 1.00 are considered high. However, this rule should be always qualified by the circumstances, depending on the discipline and the nature of variables dealt with. For example in exact sciences where they study clean and uncomplicated variables, a correlation of 0.7 is considered to be weak which is not the case for education, psychology or other social sciences.

As in this study we are dealing with complicated variable and taking into consideration the low reliability of the scale, the correlation coefficient would be interpreted as follows:

5.4.1. Correlation between emotional self-concept (esc3) and English grade (EGrade)

		EGrade	esc3
EGrade	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.116
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.257
	N	100.000	100
esc3	Pearson Correlation	.116	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.257	
	N	100	100.000

Table 31: esc3/ EGrade correlation

Corr esc3/ EGrade= 0,12

Table31 shows that the Pearson's correlation coefficient between esc3 and EGrade $r = 0.12$, which indicates a weak relationship between the two variables.

5.4.2. Correlation between emotional self concept (esc3) and general grade (GGrade)

		GGrade	esc3
GGrade	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.120
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.365
	N	100.000	100
ess3	Pearson Correlation	.120	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.365	
	N	100	100.000

Table 32: esc3 / GGrade correlation

Corr esc3/ GGrade = 0.12

Table32 shows that the Pearson's correlation coefficient between esc3 and GGrade $r = 0.12$ which indicates a weak relationship as well between the two variables.

As a conclusion, the 3-item emotional self-concept scale (esc3) is weakly correlated with both student's English grades and general grades ($r = 0.12$, $p < 0.05$)

5.4.3. Correlation between academic self-concept (asc3) and English grade (EGrade)

		asc3	EGrade
asc3	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.606**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100.000	100
EGrade	Pearson Correlation	.606**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 33: asc3 / EGrade correlation

Corr asc3/ EGrade= 0.61

Table33 shows that the Pearson's correlation coefficient between asc3 and EGrade $r= 0.61$ which indicates a moderate relationship between the two variables.

5.4.4. Correlation between academic self- concept (asc3) and general grade (GGrade)

		GGrade	asc3
GGrade	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.392**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100.000	100
asc3	Pearson Correlation	.392**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 34: asc3/ GGrade correlation

Corr asc3/ GGrade = 0.39

Table34 shows that the Pearson's correlation coefficient between asc3 and GGrade $r= 0.39$ which indicates a moderate relationship between the two variables.

As a conclusion, the 3-item academic self-concept scale (asc3) correlates with student's English grades ($r= 0.61$, $p < 0.01$) and with student's general grades ($r=0.39$, $p < 0.01$)

5.4.5. Correlation between social self- concept (ssc5) and EGrade

		ssc5	EGrade
ssc5	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.116
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.249
	N	100.000	100
EGrade	Pearson Correlation	.116	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.249	
	N	100	100.000

Table 35: ssc5 / EGrade correlation

Corr ssc5/ EGrade= 0.12

Table35 shows that the Pearson's correlation coefficient between ssc5 and EGrade $r= 0.12$ which indicates a weak relationship between the two variables.

5.4.6. Correlation between social self- concept (ssc5) and GGrade

		GGrade	ssc5
GGrade	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.011
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.912
	N	100.000	100
ssc5	Pearson Correlation	.011	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.912	
	N	100	100.000

Table 36: ssc5/ GGrade correlation

Corr ssc5/ GGrade= 0.01

From table 36 we can see that the coefficient of correlation is nonsignificant. The 5-item social self-concept scale failed to correlate with student's English grades and general grades.

6. Summary of the findings and conclusion

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to test the 6 hypotheses used to study the relationship between the self-concept and academic achievement. The three dimensions of self-concept (emotional, academic, social) were individually correlated with both the general grades and English grades of the students. Five of the hypotheses have been confirmed which is consistent with the previous studies reported in the literature.

HYPOTHESIS I

“When learners display a positive emotional self-concept, they will reach satisfactory foreign language (English) performance”

In order to test this hypothesis, emotional self-concept (esc3) was correlated with the students' English grades. The results indicate that there is a positive correlation of 0.12 between the two variables and thus, the hypothesis is accepted.

HYPOTHESIS II

“When learners display a positive emotional self-concept, their general academic achievement will be satisfactory”

This hypothesis was tested by correlating the emotional self-concept (esc3) with the students' general grades. The Pearson correlation coefficient indicates that there is a positive correlation of 0.12 and thus, the hypothesis is accepted.

HYPOTHESIS III

“When learners have a positive academic self concept in learning foreign languages (English), their achievement will be higher”

This hypothesis was tested by correlating academic self-concept (asc3) with English grades. The results indicate a positive correlation of 0.61 between the two variables and so the hypothesis is confirmed.

HYPOTHESIS IV

“When learners have a positive academic self concept, their general academic achievement will be higher”

This hypothesis was tested by correlating academic self-concept with general grades. The results indicate a positive correlation of 0.39 between the two variables and so the hypothesis is confirmed.

HYPOTHESIS V

“When learners have a positive social self concept, their foreign languages (English), achievement will be higher”

The two variables of the hypothesis were correlated. The results indicate a positive correlation of 0.12 between the social self-concept (ssc5) and English grades, which confirms the hypothesis.

HYPOTHESIS VI

“When learners have a positive social self concept their general academic achievement will be higher”

No correlation was found between the two variables of this hypothesis

Conclusion

This chapter offered a thorough methodological perspective to the research work including: the description of the population and the studied sample, the explanation of the research design and procedures and the statistical analysis of the data. The results of the correlation analysis confirmed most of the hypothesis of the study. The next and the last chapter will conclude this research work by offering recommendations and implementations on how to improve students' self-concept and their academic achievement, exposing the different enhancing approaches that could be used in the academic setting.

CHAPTER FOUR

Implementations, recommendations and conclusion

Introduction

It is safe to conclude from the review of literature and from the results of this research work that there is a positive relationship between academic achievement and academic self-concept regardless of student's intelligence. And that student's perceptions of their teacher's feelings affect their self-perceptions (students who feel liked and respected by their teachers have higher self-concept). As students' self-concept is highly correlated to school variables, the task becomes to identify the strategies and activities that will improve student's self-concept. Thus, the question to be asked is what are the strategies that should be employed and implemented to enhance students self concept?

1. Improving student's self-concept and academic achievement

From the reciprocal nature of the relationship between self-concept and achievement as revealed in the literature that was exposed in the previous chapters, we know that improving student's self-concept will certainly enhance their academic achievement. We know also, that history of success influences positively students' perception of their abilities, as they are more likely to experience more success in the future, which undoubtedly will boost their academic self-concept.

As a result two schools of thoughts emerged: The first one endorses the self enhancement theory, which argues that changes in self-concept cause changes in achievement and thus, improving student's self-concept will improve their achievement. The second school adopts the skill development theory, which believes the opposite to be true, and that identifying methods to improve student's academic achievement will enhance their self-concept. Research work showed that self-concept and achievement is rather reciprocal and thus, the focus on both self-concept and achievement should be emphasized (Silvernail, 1987).

1.1. Skill development approach

Many studies supported the skill development approach. Kifer (1973, cited in Silvernail, 1987) for example, examined the long term effects of repeated academic success and failure on students 8 to 12 graders. The results showed clearly that self-concept of ability depended on student's perceptions of their achievement (teacher's marks). Other research findings, conducted by Gibby.R.G and Gibby. S.R, on seventh graders showed that students who were told that they failed at a test regarded themselves less highly than the other students i.e. had lower self-concept.

Improving student's academic achievement can be through using variety of teaching methods such as pair work, group work, peer tutoring as well as administering learning activities that account for a variety of learners with different learning styles.

a. Learning styles

As stated by Dunn and Dunn (1992: 2), “Learning style is the way in which each learner begins to concentrate on, process and retain new and difficult information. That interaction occurs differently for everyone.” We all have different learning styles that we prefer. Some students can easily adapt and learn using variety of learning styles, while others are less flexible and can learn only in a certain way. Matching the curriculum to every student in the class is not easy if not possible, thus, raising students ‘awareness and understanding of their own styles will enable them adapt the task and become independent learners. There are three major learners:

- 1- Auditory learners** who prefer learning through listening as they display easiness in dealing with language.
- 2- Visual learners** who prefer to see things, make pictures in their head, and visualize information as a whole.
- 3- Kinesthetic learners** who prefer learning while doing things in a practical way, where touching and feeling is present such as in science experiment (pouring, mixing and assembling).

Recognizing students’ learning styles can be done through observation of the learner, through specially designed questionnaires or observing students’ eye movements (for visual learners their eyes move upwards, for the kinesthetic they move downwards and for auditory learners they move rather to the side) (Dupree, 2005).

According to Dunn et al (2009) learning styles have a great influence on students' achievement and attitudes. The Dunn and Dunn learning style model describes the way people process, internalize and retain new and difficult information. It comprises 5 components that are subdivided into 20 elements:

- 1-Individual immediate environment (light, sound...etc)
- 2- Sociological preferences (learning alone, in pairs or groups).
- 3-Emotionality (motivation, determination...etc).
- 4-Cognitive processing preferences (analytic/ global, impulsive/ reflective).
- 5-Physiological preferences (auditory, visual, tactual).

Components such as auditory, visual and tactual are called perceptual strengths that allow students to learn easily, with difficulty or not at all. The identification of the learning style preferences of the students enables both the teachers and the parents to administer the appropriate and diversified learning strategies and activities, to help students improve their skills through exploring their area of strength. It also encourages the acceptance of different behaviors within the teaching/ learning process, and rejects the one-size-fits- all approach. It increases self-autonomous learning on the part of the learners, regardless of their instructor's teaching style. It also brings a sense of equality and social justice and reduces bias. Thus, teachers should present content in ways that match student's strengths, which will lead to improving attitudes towards school and increasing academic performance. When students understand the way they learn best, their perceptions of their personal abilities and strengths improve, and they learn how to adjust conditions and employ adequate strategies to strive beyond what they had

previously accomplished. They display increased self-efficacy, better self-concept and improved relationships i.e. they become better learners.

Concerning the use of the learning strategies in the classroom, they should be used on a regular basis, before making a plan of the strategies to be used however, learning goals should be established first. The best way to choose adequate strategies, is to share creative ideas through group work, in which students share the strategies they prefer to achieve their goals. Students with the same goals can work together and share ideas for the strategies to be used and thus, increase the creativity and the variety of the goal plans. (English & Dean, 2004)

As a conclusion, many research findings showed that if we improve student academic achievement we will certainly enhance their self-concept. However, enhancing self-concept through achievement is not the only strategy as this focuses only on academic self-concept while general self-concept is as important. Research studies demonstrated that when students could view and examine their own behavior and that of others, they would change their behavior in a positive way.

1.2. Self-enhancement approach

Many research findings endorse the self-enhancement model which assumes that student's self-concept influences their motivation to learn in the first place and thus, their academic achievement. Students should be taught to turn inward, and hear their own voices. By conducting conversations with themselves, they will be able to identify their own thoughts and feelings, and set their own goals. Once goals are specified, students

should translate them into concrete actions. Moreover, students should engage in challenging activities, as meeting challenges confirms our talents and gives us a sense of confidence and efficacy. Teachers and parents are the most significant others that play a crucial role in shaping children' self-concept (Gibbons, 2002).

a- Teacher's behavior

Self-concept can be changed and teachers can affect the change either positively or negatively, however, change takes place slowly and over a long period of time. In order to achieve profound and durable change, efforts should be directed to change the central students' beliefs about their abilities and intelligence instead of putting heavy emphasis on just academic outcomes. Socially-integrative and learner-supportive teacher behavior has a positive impact on students self-concept. Such a behavior involves calm, attention to the learning task, attentiveness to students' needs, use of humor and low degree of negative evaluation. There is no doubt that friendly, understanding and sympathetic teachers increase student's self-esteem (Canfield & Wells, 1976).

Poris (1977:38 cited in Silvernail, 1987:33) stated:

"Affective teacher behavior affects students self-concept, it is based on: 1- Involving students in goal setting. 2- Avoiding threat and using positive statements and 3- Encouraging students to evaluate themselves positively i.e. teachers should teach students to set realistic goals, evaluate themselves realistically and praise themselves. "

Spaulding, R.L (1976: 313-18 cited in Silvernail, 1987:18-19) stated:

“Strong report was found ...for positive relationships between pupil self-concept and teacher behavior characterized by a high degree of private or semi private communication with children, of overt facilitation of task-oriented behavior, of concern for divergent responses in children, of attentiveness to pupil needs, of the use of control techniques involving humor- and a relatively low degree of negative evaluation, of domination over threat, of firmness in tone, of teacher-supportive control, of harsh “ taskmaster” behavior, and of grim domination.”

For preventing negative self-concepts teachers should be aware of the influence of the classroom environment they create and project to the students, as well as the perceptions they have of students and their interaction with them. The teacher’s beliefs about themselves and about their students are so important in shaping their students' self-concept (Silvernail, 1987).

“Teachers who have realistic conceptions of themselves, who are accepting of themselves and others, and who accent their positive attitudes will help students make realistic assessments and begin to view themselves in a positive light...teachers who view their students in a positive way and project favorable expectations will promote positive self-concept development” (Silvernail, 1987: 41).

Students are more committed to the learning process, when the learning environment is supportive, caring and inviting. Thus, teachers should perceive students as able, valuable and responsible. They should create a comfortable learning atmosphere where students feel welcome and at ease (Purkey & Novak, 1996), especially that students with chronic school failure, tend to feel frustrated when doing school work, anticipate failure, and

avoid challenges. Thus, helping students achieve academic success will be through addressing the attitudes and behavior related to improved motivation. Besides, any course of action should aim at increasing students' willingness to approach learning tasks, by inducing them to show higher commitment through demonstrating higher level of effort, and persistence in the learning task (Brier, 2006).

Influencing students' attitudes in SL learning depends largely on a positive attitude of the teacher. First of all, teachers should believe that all students are capable of learning as they all possess skills and understanding of their home language which they can transfer to their second language. Also, teachers should recognize the involvement of students' self-concept in second language learning, and make sure to promote it by creating a positive environment of trust, encouragement and appropriate instructions, focusing on cooperative learning, contextualized instruction and student-centered learning (lynne & weed, 2006).

Attitude theory states that attitudes shape the efforts that students display in learning another language and comprises three components: Affect, cognition and behavior.

Affect is the evaluative emotional reaction (the degree of likes and dislikes students have about the class, the language, speakers of the language and their culture).

Cognition refers to people's beliefs which they may regard as knowledge (students may have the belief that Spanish speakers are uneducated) and in most of the time, negative beliefs students hold about the language hinder their attitudes and behavior towards language learning.

Behavior on the other hand refers to the intentions or actions the students undertake in their language learning such as: attending native-like pronunciation and intending to continue language study (Bromley, 1995).

These three components are important because attitude change results from a disagreement within the components. If for example someone has a negative attitude towards a given language (affect), and his cognition is that the speakers of this language are beneath him, thus, he will ridicule the language. But if he meets an attractive and desirable speakers of this language, he may have the cognition (that they are equal) which no longer agrees with the other components and thus, he will no longer ridicule the language (change in behavior). For a change of behavior to occur, students should be aware of their own attitudes towards the language and its culture. A lot of students are first exposed to FL study through exploratory programs that are short in duration, introductory and self-contained. Those programs have the goal of introducing the learners to language learning, and make them appreciate the foreign culture and communication in another language. They also aim at enhancing the understanding of English and the motivation for further language learning in order to change attitudes and behaviors of FL learners (Bromley, 1995).

b- Parents' role

Without implicating parent's participation in promoting student's self-concept, teachers effort would be fruitless, as parents are the second most significant others who play a tremendous role in shaping their children' self-concept. Thus, cultivating a strong teacher-parents partnership is at the heart of developing an effective strategy of self-

concept enhancement. Parents are a crucial factor of their children success, and they should be aware of working towards the goal of improving academic motivation by focusing on effort and personal progress of their children instead of comparison with others, help establish and maintain an effective study place and always provide positive feedback on how to overcome their weaknesses rather than giving criticism and focusing on the negative (Brier, 2006).

2. Implementations and recommendations

The literature makes it clear that students' self-concept is shaped by the type of classroom environment teachers create, and their perception of students and interaction with them. Thus, correcting these practices is vital to preventing negative self-concepts.

2.1. Implementations

The first step to improve self-concept is to assess and diagnose it then, develop and implement activities and strategies to improve academic outcomes. The diagnosis can be achieved through observation of the students or through questionnaires. After assessing students' self-concept the teachers should identify and implement the appropriate strategies to promote existing positive self-concepts and improve low ones. Here are some of them:

2.1.1. Improving achievement/ self-concept through self-evaluation

Teaching students to evaluate themselves i.e. their work and their behavior is paramount for their progress, as they learn to make meaningful judgment and be critical readers of their own work, which will lead them to become responsible and independent

learners.

An example of an activity is to ask students to write or talk about their personal experience where they evaluate the situation and their behavior then provide suggestions on how they would improve. If the writing skill is to be emphasized you can provide a little survey where the students will evaluate the quality of their piece of writing.

Spelling	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Punctuation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Grammar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strengths.....									
									
Weaknesses.....									
									
Things to work on.....									
									

Figure 3: Writing evaluation sheet (1)

Another way also to make students evaluate their work or behavior is through filling an evaluation sheet as follows:

<p>I am satisfied/unsatisfied with work/behavior.....</p> <p>Because.....</p> <p>The things I liked about my work/behavior are:</p> <p>The things I would like to do differently are:</p>

Figure 4: Evaluation sheet (2)

It is also important to encourage students to give honest feedback about how they experience their teacher’s behavior. This activity will build a collaborative teaching-learning environment, build trust between teachers and students, and help teachers evaluate and improve their teaching.

2.1.2. Improving achievement / self-concept through Teaching according to different learning styles

To pave the way to effective learning to take place and to improve academic achievement and self-concept, teachers should diversify the learning tasks and activities in order to account for the needs of the different types of learners. Activities should be student-centered, differentiated, individual and cooperative. Here are some examples of teaching strategies and activities that can be used for the different types of learners.

Dunn and Dunn (1992) gave some examples:

-When mentioning important items for example, teachers should write them on the board to permit the ‘visual learners’ to see them and others to copy them.

Also, teachers should draw or make their students draw symbols that illustrate any important information, as visual left processors respond better to words and numbers while visual rights prefer drawings and symbols.

-Make auditory students listen first and then read, while the visual ones should read the material first then listen.

-Encourage kinesthetic learners to walk back and forth when reading their assignments (it promotes understanding).

-When teaching global students, it is important to always begin the lesson with an introduction, such as a story or an anecdote that is related to something realistic.

-Encourage group work as global learners find it less threatening to solve problems with others.

-Make global learners develop graphs, charts, games and so on as they respond better to pictures and visual representations than to words and numbers. However, when teaching analytic learners, it is important to explain the procedures and approaches to be used and write the key words and directions on the board then, have the students copy them as they respond better to words. Both categories can be taught simultaneously as the first group could be instructed while the second one is working on the assignment.

For example, while teaching students with different learning styles to prepare for a writing task to summarize a text, the teacher has to teach them different ways of notes taking and then let them adopt the technique which best suits their learning style.

-One way of notes taking is answering the six WH questions (where, what, when, why, how, who) using a writing frame and ranking the information in order of importance.

-Another way also consists of using time lines which are linear notes (made in logical lines) very helpful for verbal learners

1930 →

1945 →

1980 →

-Cloze passage is another way of notes taking that suits verbal learners as they replace the gaps with the missing words.

-Another way consists of drawing pictures (suited for visual learners) to illustrate the new information in the text since the information converted to visual images visual students can understand the text and use their notes more effectively.

2.1.3. Self-concept enhancement through creating self-directed/ self-regulated learners

High achievers display responsibility and efficiency in controlling their academic-learning process. They are self-efficacious, in the sense that they possess the beliefs and perceptions of capability to perform and learn tasks. Self-regulatory cycle gives students a sense of personal control which generates intrinsic motivation for learning. It helps students to self-evaluate their efficiency, set-goals and monitor their progress. The ability of self-regulation flourishes in a social environment of devotion and common purpose like in families and effective schools. When students are taught how to master methods and techniques of learning, they adopt a self-regulatory attitude and become more aware of improvement in their academic experience and develop a strong sense of personal efficacy.

The self-regulatory model comprises four steps: The first step is evaluating one's current level of learning in a given task, this self-evaluation is sustained by teachers, peers or parents' feedback. The second step is analyzing the learning task, setting goals and planning a learning strategy. The third step consists of implementing the learner's strategy choice which is influenced by previously used strategies as well as peers and teachers' feedback. The fourth step involves the learner's monitoring, which includes the association of performance outcomes with strategic variation to test effectiveness. Self-regulatory training not only teaches students the needed learning skills, but also how to be aware of the effective strategies and techniques to be used to reach proficiency. As a result, it deepens learners' perception about their self-efficacy and control over the learning process (Zimmerman, Bonner & Kovach, 1996).

Empowering students for better achievement consists of adopting a self-directed learning in which students take initiatives and decide what they are going to learn, devise a plan of learning strategies and activities, manage their own efforts, time and resources and keep a record of their learning experience. The aim is to encourage students to be self-directed learners, and motivate them to motivate themselves in order to learn to find and pursue their personal interests, struggle and successfully achieve (as one success encourages pursuing another). Self regulated learners accept responsibility for their achievement as they see learning a controllable process. These learners are confident, resilient and resourceful as they plan, set goals, devise the appropriate learning activities and the required time, monitor and evaluate their own progress (Gibbons, 2002).

2.1.4. Self-concept enhancement through promoting positive feelings

An example of an activity that can boost students' self-concept is to ask students to talk and expose their good feelings as well as confronting their bad ones. Talking about good feelings will enable students feel good about themselves and expressing negative feelings will enable them to have an accurate and realistic evaluation about themselves, accept criticism and develop a healthy self-concept. It is also the core component for self-acceptance and self-realization. Such an activity can be implemented in teaching written or oral expression. The students could be asked for example to write or talk about the way they felt about an argument they had with a schoolmate, the way they reacted and what they think about their reaction. Such an activity not only make the students express their good and bad feeling but also encourage them to make public statements (oral expression) and express their opinions in front of the class without the fear of being

ridiculed and judged by their peers or the teacher. If students can affirm publicly what they believe in and everybody else respects their ideas, they will not doubt themselves and their self-concept grows. Before students are able to speak their minds however, teachers should let them know that they are encouraged to take part in the learning process and that it is ok that they make mistakes as they are part of learning and that they will not be judged or intimidated.

In sum, teachers shouldn't undermine the power of semantics in improving students' self-concept and they should create an affective environment that promotes learning, and use supportive and encouraging words that promote positivism and well being.

Another way of promoting positive feelings is through group work as it promotes interaction between students and prevents some students to dominate the class. It reduces stress as students feel that they are not the focus of attention and helps them feel more expressive as they feel less anxiety. They learn to trust each other as it provides a risk free structure of partners and promotes the feeling of safety and belonging.

Activities such as reading passages, and group discussion where the teacher plays the role of a facilitator while the students express their feelings and opinions is effective in promoting confidence , competence and self-awareness and thus develops more realistic self-images.

Another way of promoting positive self-concept is through pride. Teachers should teach their students to be proud of themselves this will teach them to love and value themselves and build a positive self-concept. A simple example of such an activity could be to ask students to write statements in which they list the things that they have done and they are proud of, for example:

Complete the following statements:

I am proud of.....

I am proud that.....

Another exercise in the same context that could be integrated in the teaching of grammar (teaching adjectives) would be to ask students to write the words that describe them, then ask them to classify the adjectives into two columns: one for the ones they are pleased with and the second for the ones they don't like. Then, ask them to cross out each time one that they don't like and how they feel about it. Then, do the opposite and ask them how they feel like if they had to lose the good qualities. This exercise teaches students to know themselves, recognize their negative points and value their positive ones and thus, enhance their self-confidence and self-concept. Or also when teaching written expression, students could be asked to think of a time when they were depressed, angry, disappointed or any other negative feelings and then ask them to write a letter to themselves in which they state whatever they know will sooth them, bring them enjoyment, happiness and get them to love themselves (Canfield & Siccone ,1995).

Canfield and Siccone (1995: 62) pointed out:

“The effectiveness of the relationship rests on a belief in the essential dignity and worth of all students and a trust in their ability to be autonomous and responsible individuals. The role of the coach is to relate to students in a respectful, nonjudgmental, and trusting manner that allows students to explore, discover, set goals, and make commitments to directions that they have envisioned for themselves” (Canfield and Siccone, 1995: 62).

They also stated that teachers who succeed in creating responsible classrooms are those who are responsible because they: respond, not react...accept, not judge... empower, not control...focus on purpose, not position...find solutions, not find faults.

2.2. Recommendations

As it is the aim of this study, a list of recommendations is presented here for educators in order to improve their students' self-concept for better academic outcomes:

-Teachers should explain explicitly from the beginning, that they are interested in every student as a unique person, and that they are committed to walk students towards self-realization rather than destroy them.

-Students should get the feeling that their teacher has confidence in them, believe in their abilities to learn and to be competent, that he is not here to judge them but to help them and assist them in their academic achievements and accomplishments.

-Teachers should state explicitly what they expect from the students, and help them set their own goals and their own expectations however, this is not enough if it is not translated in everyday behavior i.e. words are useless if not translated into actions.

-Teachers should show interest in their students' needs, and encourage them to express their ideas and opinions, in an environment based on interaction and collaboration where enthusiasm and humor are present.

- Teachers should teach their students to clearly define goals, analyze them and find out the steps of their realization, set the time limits, take into consideration the possible obstacles and the solutions and how to evaluate and monitor progress.

-Teachers should teach the students self-evaluation which is an effective way to enhance self-concept. Through self-evaluation, students learn to describe themselves objectively, and identify the behavior they want to change.

-Teachers should use praise as part of the learning process, and teach students to praise themselves and their peers as positive statements lead to positive self-concept.

-Teachers should encourage students to focus on the positive aspects of themselves, talk about their positive feelings, accomplishments, strengths and what they are proud of, and share their success with others. This will boost their self-concept and make them feel good about themselves.

-Teachers should encourage students to talk about their negative feelings and weaknesses as well because until somebody accepts his faults, he will always doubt his virtues. Discussing bad feelings of hate, aggression and anger will not only allow students to talk them out instead of acting them out, but also realize that those feelings are natural and learn how to redirect them into a positive response.

-The main task of evaluation and assessment has been to point out students' negative points and weaknesses, however, the core stone of evaluation should be to emphasize positive reinforcement, and focus on strengths and their development while treating errors as a way of nurturing capacity rather than revealing ignorance.

-Mastery learning is another effective way to improve both achievement and self-concept, as it is based on the assumption that all students can reach a high level of competence, if the right action is taken and enough time is allowed (Silvernail, 1987).

-‘Role playing’ is an effective method to help students experience feelings and thoughts, when faced with situations that challenge their ability and motivation (Brier , 2006).

-Homework assignments are also a good way to increase students' efforts on a daily basis and encourage them to transfer class knowledge to real life situation, and be more aware of their level of motivation.

-Teachers should accept students' contributions without judgment, support the 'you can do it' attitude, focus on strengths rather than weaknesses and avoid negativism and 'attacking' type procedure.

- They should help the students to be aware of themselves, take responsibility for their situations, choose among possible alternatives, affirm their decisions, develop a plan of action, act and at the end evaluate the outcome (Canfield & Well, 1976).

As Gibbons (2002) pointed it self-concept is enhanced through creating a healthy environment of learning based on motivation and creating independent students. If students are engaged and determined to confront their difficulties, they will achieve success which will give them pride and self-esteem thus teachers should:

- * Ask challenging questions, give students problems to solve and let them challenge themselves and find the answer.

- * Build a pattern of success by considering every new accomplishment as success, and accepting failure as part of the learning process as the real failure is an event from which you learn nothing.

- * Encourage students to always keep a picture of the best results they can imagine in their minds, and adopt a positive attitude and language such as 'yes I can', 'yes I will',

and always be proud of themselves to avoid helpless behavior.

* Make sure to target individual difficult students and involve them in a network of social interaction.

*Diversify the teaching styles and activities to reach to all types of learners.

Finally, much more focus should be put on developing a better parent-teacher relationship as parents are the most 'significant others' and that all teachers' efforts will be in vain if parents are doing the opposite job. Thus, real partnership should be developed between parents and teachers to work together, share concerns and combine efforts to enhance students' self-concept.

3. Limitations of the study

According to a paper presented at self-concept symposium, Boston, (1978 cited in Silvernail 1987: 29)

“Too many variables intervene between self-concept and the self-report to modify or distort what the person is able or willing to say about self. Just a few of these variables may be: The willingness of the subject to cooperate, the subject's possession of adequate language to express his experiential self, social expectancies impinging upon the subject at the time he or she is asked for self-description, the subject's own goals or purposes in the encounter, the relationship with the requester, and the subject's freedom from threat or coercion- [these] are only a few of the possible sources of errors.”

As pointed out in the Boston symposium and in regards to the self-concept scale that was used in this study we have to mention that this research work bears some limitations and that the self-report may be distorted due to different reasons among them:

- The unwillingness of the students to cooperate and reveal their true feelings.
- The false perception students have about themselves, and the inability to provide objective and accurate evaluation.
- The student's own goals or purposes while answering the questionnaire.

In addition the subscales have a low reliability which could have influenced the results of the correlations. Another limitation lays in the issue of causality as the correlation analysis is not able to determine the directionality of effects between the self-concept and academic achievement. Thus, the causality could be reciprocal as indicated in the literature and further research is required to examine this issue. Also, those results are specific to a particular group of participants from a rather low socio-economic status a factor that might have influenced the results of the correlations. Thus, the results are not to be generalized and further studies are required.

Conclusion

This last chapter offered a reasonable scope of implementations and recommendations on how to improve students 'self-concept and academic achievement, exposing the different theories and approaches as well as the strategies and activities to be used in the classrooms for a better academic outcome. It also presented some limitations of the study according to educational and social settings

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Through the years schools have been emphasizing the cognitive development of students with little if any attention to the socio-emotional development. In fact, schools have been the place where youth develop a low self-image of themselves while it should be just the place that promotes their potential and enhance their self-concept for better scholastic outcomes. This research work provides a deep insight on the importance of students' self-concept in shaping academic achievement; it also raises both teachers and parents' awareness about the role they play in promoting and enhancing the students' self-concept to improve their academic achievement.

The study starts by exploring the theoretical foundations of the self with an attempt to clarify the distinction between the different self-terms that have been used for decades interchangeably leading to a lack of consistency and confusion in the related literature. Moreover, the study offers a theoretical perspective on the learning process underlying the different learning/ teaching theories pertaining to foreign languages in general and English as a foreign language in particular, as well as on the academic achievement and the different influencing factors such as gender, ethnicity, parental and teacher involvement. Then, the study report the correlation results between both academic achievement and self-concept and between academic achievement and foreign language learning (English) presented in the literature.

As the study investigated the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement, a correlation analysis has been conducted. Both general grades and English grades of the students were correlated with the three dimensions of self-concept (emotional, academic, social). The results of the analysis confirmed five hypotheses out of six.

-There was a positive correlation between emotional self-concept (esc3) and both English and general grades.

- There was a positive correlation between academic self-concept (asc3) and both English and general grades.

-There was a positive correlation between social self-concept (ssc5) and English grades but no correlation was found between social self-concept (ssc5) and general grades.

The present study has a few limitations and thus, the results are not to be generalized until other studies are carried out. One of the limitations lays in the issue of causality. The study relied on correlation analysis which is not able to determine the directionality of effects between the self-concept and academic achievement. Thus, the causality could be reciprocal as indicated in the literature and further research is required to examine this issue. The other limitation is related to the scale used to measure the students' self-concept which has a low reliability and which could have influenced the results of the correlations (We might have obtained higher correlations if the scale have had a high coefficient of reliability). Moreover, the study reflects the self-concept of participants specific to one region of the country which is a remote village of Borj Bou Arreridj where

most of the students are from a rather low socio-economic status a factor that might have influenced the results of the correlations.

The results presented in this study provide a basis for future research and for improvement of educational practice. It has implications for curricular changes and provides variety of teaching strategies to be used by teachers and the attitudes that ought to be adopted for a better academic outcome in general and in foreign languages in particular. Moreover, further research could explore the characteristics of the schools that have high levels of students with high self-concepts. Although more rigorous studies are necessary to verify the causal relationships, the results of the present study demonstrate that the self-concept of the students and their academic achievement are related and thus, the academic setting should give due attention to promote the socio-affective factors in the learning process.

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APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT

The questionnaire serves as a data collection tool for a Master degree in Teaching methodology and a Research Project in language teaching methodology carried by Miss Idjhanine Anissa. Your answers will be of a great help to us. Will you please fill in or complete the required information and make choices wherever necessary. Thank you very much for your contribution.

AGE CLASS.....

SEX. : Male Female

1-You are satisfied with yourself

a-Always

b- sometimes

c- never

2-You think that you have good qualities

a-A lot of

b- some

c- few

3-You take positive attitude toward yourself

Yes no

4-You think that you are useful for others

a-Always

b-sometimes

c-never

5-You think that you are not good at all

a- Always

b- sometimes

c- never

6-You think that you are

a- not intelligent

b- quite intelligent

c- very intelligent

7-You think that you are intelligent but you can't do much with it

yes no

8-You think that your ability to learn is

a- Stable and uncontrollable

b- Unstable and controllable

9-When you want to do something; you know that it is going to be

a- Successful

b- unsuccessful

10-For you, individual abilities change with hard work, study and practice

Yes no

11-You like foreign languages

Yes no

12-You think that you have aptitude to learn foreign languages

a-None

b-Some

c- great

13-You think that there are things in foreign languages that you can not learn even if you make the necessary effort

Yes no

14-You have a- no hope to be good at foreign languages
 b- little hope
 c- great hope

15-If great hope is your answer, say why. Is it because you

- a. like foreign languages and teachers
- b. Like their teaching methods
- c. Feel relaxed and motivated with them
- d- other things

16- Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad luck

Yes no

17-People's misfortunes result from the mistakes they make

Yes no

18- In the long run people get the respect they deserve in this world

Yes no

19- Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognized no matter how hard they try

No yes

20- No matter how hard you try, some people just don't like you

Yes no

21- People who can't get others to like them don't understand how to get along with others

Yes no

22- You think that teachers are unfair to students

Yes no

APPENDIX II

Frequencies of English and General Grades

Statistics

English Grade

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0

English Grade

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4.00	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	4.50	1	1.0	1.0	3.0
	5.00	5	5.0	5.0	8.0
	5.50	1	1.0	1.0	9.0
	6.00	7	7.0	7.0	16.0
	6.50	5	5.0	5.0	21.0
	7.00	15	15.0	15.0	36.0
	8.00	17	17.0	17.0	53.0
	8.50	1	1.0	1.0	54.0
	9.00	14	14.0	14.0	68.0
	9.50	2	2.0	2.0	70.0
	10.00	15	15.0	15.0	85.0
	10.50	1	1.0	1.0	86.0
	11.00	5	5.0	5.0	91.0
	12.00	4	4.0	4.0	95.0
	12.50	1	1.0	1.0	96.0
	13.00	2	2.0	2.0	98.0
	13.50	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total		100	100.0	100.0	

Statistics

General Grade

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0

General Grade

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	8.00	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
	8.23	1	1.0	1.0	2.0
	8.41	1	1.0	1.0	3.0
	8.42	1	1.0	1.0	4.0
	8.45	1	1.0	1.0	5.0
	8.50	1	1.0	1.0	6.0
	8.56	1	1.0	1.0	7.0
	8.64	1	1.0	1.0	8.0
	8.85	1	1.0	1.0	9.0
	8.99	1	1.0	1.0	10.0
	9.00	2	2.0	2.0	12.0
	9.02	1	1.0	1.0	13.0
	9.04	1	1.0	1.0	14.0
	9.07	1	1.0	1.0	15.0
	9.09	1	1.0	1.0	16.0
	9.11	2	2.0	2.0	18.0
	9.14	1	1.0	1.0	19.0
	9.16	1	1.0	1.0	20.0
	9.18	1	1.0	1.0	21.0
	9.19	1	1.0	1.0	22.0
	9.20	3	3.0	3.0	25.0
	9.23	1	1.0	1.0	26.0
	9.25	1	1.0	1.0	27.0

9.31	1	1.0	1.0	28.0
9.35	1	1.0	1.0	29.0
9.36	2	2.0	2.0	31.0
9.37	1	1.0	1.0	32.0
9.40	1	1.0	1.0	33.0
9.42	1	1.0	1.0	34.0
9.44	1	1.0	1.0	35.0
9.45	1	1.0	1.0	36.0
9.48	1	1.0	1.0	37.0
9.50	4	4.0	4.0	41.0
9.51	2	2.0	2.0	43.0
9.57	1	1.0	1.0	44.0
9.59	1	1.0	1.0	45.0
9.60	1	1.0	1.0	46.0
9.71	1	1.0	1.0	47.0
9.75	1	1.0	1.0	48.0
9.79	2	2.0	2.0	50.0
9.80	2	2.0	2.0	52.0
9.85	2	2.0	2.0	54.0
9.88	1	1.0	1.0	55.0
9.89	3	3.0	3.0	58.0
9.90	2	2.0	2.0	60.0
9.93	1	1.0	1.0	61.0
9.97	1	1.0	1.0	62.0
10.00	1	1.0	1.0	63.0
10.01	1	1.0	1.0	64.0
10.12	1	1.0	1.0	65.0
10.14	1	1.0	1.0	66.0
10.18	1	1.0	1.0	67.0
10.24	1	1.0	1.0	68.0

10.25	1	1.0	1.0	69.0
10.27	1	1.0	1.0	70.0
10.30	1	1.0	1.0	71.0
10.35	1	1.0	1.0	72.0
10.45	1	1.0	1.0	73.0
10.53	1	1.0	1.0	74.0
10.57	1	1.0	1.0	75.0
10.62	1	1.0	1.0	76.0
10.65	1	1.0	1.0	77.0
10.67	1	1.0	1.0	78.0
10.75	2	2.0	2.0	80.0
10.83	2	2.0	2.0	82.0
11.02	1	1.0	1.0	83.0
11.07	1	1.0	1.0	84.0
11.12	1	1.0	1.0	85.0
11.17	1	1.0	1.0	86.0
11.29	1	1.0	1.0	87.0
11.38	1	1.0	1.0	88.0
11.50	3	3.0	3.0	91.0
11.56	1	1.0	1.0	92.0
11.63	1	1.0	1.0	93.0
11.81	1	1.0	1.0	94.0
11.90	1	1.0	1.0	95.0
11.92	1	1.0	1.0	96.0
12.00	1	1.0	1.0	97.0
12.09	1	1.0	1.0	98.0
12.51	1	1.0	1.0	99.0
12.60	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

ملخص

تؤكد الأبحاث الحديثة على أهمية المكونات النفسية للتعلم مع التركيز المتزايد على دور المتغيرات و السمات مثل مفهوم الذات لتحسين الأداء المدرسي . تبين الكتابات أن التعلم يبدأ مع التعزيز الفعال للمفهوم المصيري كعنصر أساسي في تزايد قدرة مستقلة وناجحة للمتعلمين .وفي هذا السياق ، يحاول هذا البحث الإجابة على عدد من الأسئلة ذات الصلة بدور المعلمين والمدرسة في تعزيز مفهوم الذات من أجل الحصول على أفضل النتائج في سياق التعليم الثانوي العام و دروس في الانكليزية مع عينة من طلاب المدارس الثانوية .ومع ذلك، كيف يمكن لطلابنا طلب المساعدة عندما يكون لديهم مشاكل؟ كيف يمكن للكثير منهم محاولة التعلم وهم مقتنعون أنهم لا يستطيعون ذلك؟ من المفترض في هذه الدراسة أنه عند المتعلمين تصور إيجابي عن النفس،يؤدي إلى تحصيلهم الأكاديمي العام و تحسين في نفس الوقت لأدائهم في اللغة الإنجليزية. البيانات التي تم جمعها باستخدام الاستبيان و النتائج المدرسية تظهر الارتباط بين المتغيرات المختلفة التي تؤكد فرضية البحث. بعد تحليل النتائج تخلص الدراسة إلى ضرورة رفع مستوى الوعي حول أهمية مفهوم الذات في عملية التعليم العام وتعلم اللغات الأجنبية ، لمساعدة المعلمين وأولياء الأمور لكسب المعركة ضد التحديات التي يواجهونها و هي معدلات التسرب ، وضعف الأداء المدرسي ، انعدام الحافز في مفهوم الذات الأكاديمي. إن أكبر حقيقة لا يمكن إنكارها هي أن كل طفل لديه القدرة على التعلم والنجاح إذا تم توفير البيئة المناسبة لتفعيل مفهوم الذات .

Résumé

Des recherches récentes affirment l'importance des composantes psychologiques de l'apprentissage avec un accent croissant sur le rôle des variables de personnalité tels que le concept de soi pour améliorer les résultats scolaires. La littérature montre que l'apprentissage efficace commence par la promotion de l'auto-concept, un ingrédient essentiel pour la culture des apprenants autonomes et prospères. Dans ce cadre, cette recherche tente de répondre à un certain nombre de questions pertinentes sur le rôle des enseignants et le milieu scolaire dans la promotion du concept de soi en vue d'obtenir de meilleurs résultats dans le cadre d'études secondaires générales et les cours d'anglais auprès d'un échantillon d'élèves du secondaire . Cependant, combien de nos étudiants ne peuvent pas nous demander de l'aide quand ils ont des difficultés? Combien d'entre eux ne peuvent pas parler devant un groupe et sacrifient leurs chances d'apprendre? Combien d'entre eux ne peuvent même pas essayer, juste parce qu'ils sont persuadés qu'ils ne peuvent pas? " On suppose, dans cette étude, que lorsque les apprenants affichent une perception positive de soi, leur réalisation scolaire générale s'améliore en même temps que leur performance en Anglais langue étrangère. Les données -collectées sur la base d'un questionnaire et les notes scolaires- présentent des résultats significatifs pour établir une corrélation entre les différentes variables de l'étude et de confirmer l'hypothèse. L'étude détermine la nécessité de sensibiliser la population à l'importance du concept de soi dans le processus général d'apprentissage et dans l'apprentissage des langues étrangères, pour aider les enseignants et les parents à gagner la bataille contre les défis auxquels ils sont confrontés: taux d'abandon scolaire, faible rendement scolaire, manque de motivation et un faible concept de soi scolaire, comme le fait indéniable est que chaque enfant a la capacité d'apprendre et de réussir si l'environnement adéquat est prévu.