

**A DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH OF ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT IN THE
SUPRASEGMENTAL PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY I CLASS IN RELATION
TO REPETITION IN THE ELT PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSIDAD INDUSTRIAL
DE SANTANDER**

ANGELA MARIA FORERO MORENO

**UNIVERSIDAD INDUSTRIAL DE SANTANDER
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS HUMANAS
ESCUELA DE IDIOMAS
LICENCIATURA EN INGLES
BUCARAMANGA
2007**

**A DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH OF ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT IN THE
SUPRASEGMENTAL PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY I CLASS IN RELATION
TO REPETITION IN THE ELT PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSIDAD INDUSTRIAL
DE SANTANDER.**

ANGELA MARIA FORERO MORENO

**ESPERANZA REVELO JIMENES
PROFESSOR**

**UNIVERSIDAD INDUSTRIAL DE SANTANDER
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS HUMANAS
ESCUELA DE IDIOMAS
LICENCIATURA EN INGLES
BUCARAMANGA
2007**

CONTENTS

	Page.
1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	13
INTRODUCTION	13
SELF-CONCEPT	14
ATTRIBUTION THEORY	21
REPETITION	23
IMPORTANCE- PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS	24
2. DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM	26
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	26
3. OBJECTIVES	27
4. JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH	28
5. RESEARCH DESIGN	30
6. METHODOLOGY	31
PARTICIPANTS AND SETTINGS.	31
DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS	31
PROCEDURE	33
7. ANALYSIS OF DATA	35
8. RESULTS	38
ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT	38
9. DISCUSSION	48
10. CONCLUSIONS	55
REFERENCES	58

TABLES

	Page.
Table 1. Participants' Academic Self-concept levels.	38
Importance-Performance Analysis	39
Table 2. Suprasegmental Phonetics and Phonology I Importance and Performance Means	40
Table 3. Importance-Performance ratings for students who were repeating the Suprasegmental Phonetics and Phonology I class.	42
Table 4. Importance-Performance ratings for students who were taking the Suprasegmental Phonetics and Phonology I class.	43

FIGURES

	Page.
Figure 1. Importance-Performance Grid for all students.	39
Figure 2. Importance-Performance grid for students who were repeating the subject	41
Figure 3. Importance-Performance grid for students who were taking the Suprasegmental Phonetics and phonology I class the first time.	42

APPENDIX

Page.

APPENDIX FOR SURVEY QUESTIONS

60

APPENDIX FOR INTERVIEW GUIDE

66

GLOSSARY

Self: It is a complex system of beliefs an individual holds true about himself. (Purkey, 1970)

Self-Concept: As it is defined by Aiken (2003), it is the way a person views himself; it concerns his attitudes, expectancies and social roles. In other words, it has to do with the beliefs and ideas someone has about himself.

Self-Concept: For Williams & Burden (1997), the term self-concept involves three important concepts:

- **Self-Image:** It has to do with the way each person views himself.

- **Self-Esteem:** It is related to the feelings each person holds according to his self-image.

- **Self-Efficacy:** It is defined as the beliefs a person has about his capabilities in a specific area or context.

Attribution Theory: This theory argues that people always tend to look for reasons to explain their behavior, especially when the results obtained from a situation are not the ones people expected. In other words, it has to do with the interpretation an individual holds about the causes that promote someone's behavior; or assumptions about the possible factors implicated in the results obtained after any kind of task. (Weiner, as cited in Williams and Burden, 1997).

Phonetics: It is the study of the sounds used in speaking. (Roach, P.)

Phonology: It studies the functions of the speech sounds in a language, and the relationship among the phonemes of such language. (Roach, P.)

SUMMARY

TITLE: A DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH OF ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT IN THE SUPRASEGMENTAL PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY I CLASS IN RELATION TO REPETITION IN THE ELT PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSIDAD INDUSTRIAL DE SANTANDER.

AUTHOR: ANGELA M. FORERO MORENO **

KEY WORDS: Self-concept, self- image, self- esteem, self- efficacy, attribution theory.

The current study tries to investigate and describe the Academic Self-Concept of students of Suprasegmental Phonetics and Phonology I class in relation to the repetition of this subject, considering it as one of the most failed subjects in the ELT program at the Universidad Industrial de Santander. This study focus in this area taking into account it is one of the most failed and cancelled subjects in the program. It is aimed through this study not only to describe from a different standpoint, but also to create a space to debate the topic and find some solutions to the students and teachers difficulties;

This study population was comprised of students who were repeating the class, as well as students who were taking it for the first time, in order to find the differences between the academic self-concept of the two different populations;

This research also identifies some of the factors students attribute their performance in the class of Phonetics and Phonology, and attempts to know if there is an agreement or contradiction between some attributes students consider as important for being successful in the class, and the way they are performing in relation to those features. The study makes use of the Importance-Performance technique to analyze the attributes that merit some kind of intervention. Data collection was possible due to the application of four scales design according to the objectives of the study. The findings were not relevant between the two groups and could be a result of factors such as students attributions of their perceive failure or success, past experiences among others.

* Research Project

** Human Sciences Faculty. School of languages. Esperanza Revelo Jiménez.

RESUMEN

TITULO: A DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH OF ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT IN THE SUPRASEGMENTAL PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY I CLASS IN RELATION TO REPETITION IN THE ELT PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSIDAD INDUSTRIAL DE SANTANDER*

AUTOR: ANGELA M. FORERO MORENO **

PALABRAS CLAVE: auto concepto, auto imagen, auto estima, auto eficacia, teoría de la atribución.

El presente estudio pretende investigar y describir el Auto concepto Académico de los estudiantes de Fonética y Fonología Suprasegmental I, en relación con la repitencia de dicha asignatura del Programa de Licenciatura en Ingles de la Universidad Industrial de Santander. El estudio se enfoca en esta área, teniendo en cuenta que en ella se presenta un gran número de estudiantes que la cancelan o la pierden semestralmente;

Se pretende a través de él, no sólo describir desde un punto de vista diferente, sino también crear un espacio de debate sobre el tema que permita encontrar soluciones a las dificultades que presentan los estudiantes y maestros en tal área. La población implicada está conformada por tres estudiantes repitentes y tres estudiantes no repitentes de la asignatura mencionada;

Esta investigación también identifica algunos factores a los cuales los estudiantes atribuyen su desempeño académico en la materia de Fonética y Fonología. Además, intenta explorar si hay coherencia o contradicción entre algunos atributos que están relacionados con el desempeño exitoso en esta asignatura. La información obtenida permite evidenciar cuales atributos resultan problemáticos, y así considerar algún tipo de intervención o estrategia por parte de alumnos y docentes. La recolección de datos se logro mediante la aplicación de 3 diferentes escalas y una entrevista semi estructurada. Los resultados no presentaron diferencias relevantes entre los dos grupos y pueden ser causados por diferentes factores tales como las atribuciones de los estudiantes a su fracaso o logro, experiencias pasadas, entre otras.

* Trabajo de Investigación

** Facultad de Ciencias Humanas. Escuela de Idiomas. Esperanza Revelo Jiménez.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, humans have made innumerable attempts to find our essence, our nature by asking questions and looking for the answers to those questions. We humans are complex and difficult to define; we are comprised of many elements, we differ greatly from one person to another. We are body, mind and soul; definitely, we are more than our eyes can perceive.

For more than half a century, different sciences have made valuable contributions to the understanding of humans. Psychology, for example has intended to explain the various processes that configure our thoughts, feelings and actions from different theoretical standpoints; all of which have influenced education. Freudian, Gestalts, and Introspections psychologists emphasized the value of studying the self and the internal structures of mind, such as awareness and consciousness. In contrast, behaviorists claimed that only the measurable and observable behavior of a person could be catalogued as scientific.

According to Wylie (1961, as cited in Purkey.), the behaviorist tried to cancel all other theoretical schools, except their own, arguing that those which focused on consciousness were not valid, taking into account that for them only tangible and observable people's behavior could fit the scientific field. As a result both education and psychology abandoned the subject of the self.

Nowadays the interest of mental structures, the self, as well as affective and cognitive processes is of much greater importance in both education and psychology. Although due to the American psychology the study of the self declined, there were many other psychologists such as Maslow (1974), Prescott

Lecky (1945), Murphy (1947), and Raimy (1948), who continued working in the area of the self (As cited in Purkey, 1974). Education has tried to apply different psychological theories, such as Freud's theories of unconscious motivations, and Maslow (1954) with his theories of self-actualization among others. As Purkey says, Gordon Allport (1937, 1943, 1955, 1961), was a person who argue issues about the self in relation to learning and motivation.

SELF-CONCEPT

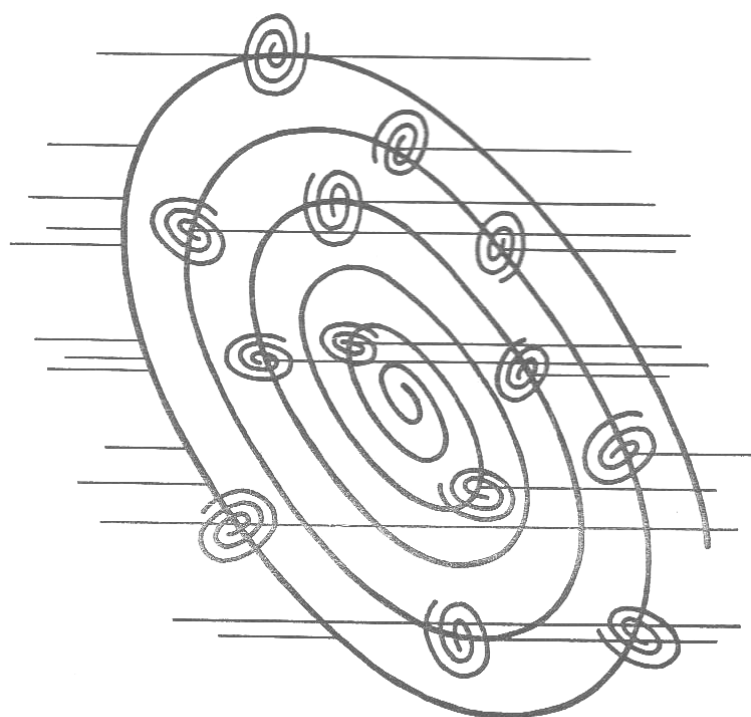
Defining the self and related concepts such as self-concept, self esteem, and self-image among others is not an easy job. As a starting point, William James (as cited in Green, C.D,) refers to the self in a broad sense as to all that a person can call his/her own; not only his body and psychological traits, but also to all his possessions like his house, his wife, and his car. All these give him emotions; they can make him feel happy, worried or depressed.

For Mead, G. H. (1934) the self is a socially emerging concept, it means that the concept anyone has about himself is constructed by the interaction with others and the view each person has about their role in this interaction. According to Mead, It is not an innate characteristic of humans, but a product developed along the social activity of individuals, which at the same time is marked by the use of communication through language, the primary social foundation of the self. In this kind of interaction individuals respond to others with certain attitudes that symbolize attitudes of others.

According to William Purkey (1970), the "Self" is "a complex system of beliefs which an individual holds true about himself, each belief with a corresponding value." From that definition and referring to the findings of different research in this area, Purkey explains that the "Self" is an organized entity. He represents this statement by a graphic in which the "Self" is compared to a spiral (graphic 1). This

spiral is conformed of other little spirals that represents a different belief people have about themselves. The beliefs are represented by categories such as student, singer, Indian, friend, football player, and many others. These categories are at the same time qualified by different characteristics (happy, tall, handsome, bad, and incapable).

Graphic 1. The Self. William Purkey, 1970.



Purkey (1970) affirms that some of these beliefs or concepts are closer to the core of the large spiral, which means they are more relevant for the person; meanwhile other beliefs remain less close to the centre. Those beliefs closer to the essence of the self are more stable and resistant to change, in opposition to those far from the core.

Another significant part is that each one of these concepts has its positive and negative value, represented by the lines (graphic 1). Purkey (1970) explains that each concept located in the large self has its value. A concept close to the centre of the self may have a positive or a negative connotation. He cites an example related to an Indian person whose ethnicity is a central part of him self, but who is not proud of being Indian.

Purkey (1970) continues to point out that each concept may lead to a generalization of failure or success. He argues through an example that if someone believes he is a good cook, and cooking is something quite important for him, repetitive failures in the kitchen may low his self-esteem in other areas not too much related to that concept.

Finally, Purkey (1970) concludes that an important characteristic of the Self is the sense of uniqueness. No two people have the same kind of beliefs about themselves in the same area. Each person considers himself in a different manner, according to the view he has about the world, and also according to the experiences he has had to face.

In summary, the self is a product of the individual perceptions that people have about the world as a result of personal experience. At the same time, the Self becomes a referent to understand new situations and problems. Each interpretation made about an event also depends on the importance it has for us, on the way it is relevant or irrelevant to us and to our world. In this sense, a close link is established between the Self and motivation. When someone considers a particular situation relevant to him and to his self, he is motivated to do different things in order to reach his aims. Behavior can reveal the perceptions one person holds about himself and the world, since people tend to behave in a ways related to those perceptions.

Self-concept is also defined by Lewis R. Aiken (2003) as the way a person views himself; it includes the attitudes, the expectancies, and the social roles of the person. In general, it has to do with the beliefs and ideas someone has about himself. According to Aiken, self-concept depends on the comparisons people make of themselves concerning physical and mental capacities in relation to others. Similarly, Aiken defines self-esteem as the evaluation people make about themselves.

The term self-concept is especially difficult to describe because it is multifaceted. For some researchers, the meaning refers to the same ideas conveyed by terms such as self-esteem, self-image, self-identity, and self-regard.

According to Wrasman (n.d.), self-concept is considered a global term that comprises feelings, attitudes, and knowledge related to appearance, social relationships, and abilities. Williams & Burden (1997) state that the nature of this term involves three different aspects: *Self-image* (the view each person has about themselves), *self-esteem* (the feelings associated with the self-image), and *self-efficacy* (the beliefs one has about the capabilities in certain areas).

Some other authors consider self-concept as a group of organized information about oneself conformed by three important factors: cognitive factors, which have to do with thinking; affective factors, related to feelings; and finally conative factors, associated to behavior.

In the current work the term of self-concept refers to the view and feelings that a person has about himself in a specific context. In this case, self-concept is related to the academic context. Thus, academic self-concept is referred to the way a person views and feels himself as a learner.

The issue of academic self-concept has been an important topic in education. As already discussed, self-concept is influenced by the ways in which one views the world. Many researchers have demonstrated that self-concept plays an important role in the learning and teaching processes by examining the relationship between self-concept and individual academic failure or success, in other words the level of academic achievement. In these studies, great importance has been placed on the context of learning and the communicative interactions that take place in that context, in this case the classroom. In these cases, classroom interactions influence the perceptions a student holds about their own abilities and capacities. (Williams and Burden, 1997).

According to Weinstein (1989, as cited in Williams & Burden 1997), self concept, defined as the relations between students and the learning environment, including their teachers and classmates, has an affect on students' academic performance. Weinstein explains that the gestures of teachers, the praise, the grades, the comments teachers make of their pupils in general, are real signs that allows students to interpret how smart they are considered in the educational community (1997). William Purkey (1970), explains that since 1960 the issue of self-concept and its relation to academic achievement has grown steadily in terms of importance and different researchers have been dedicated to explain the possible kinds of relationships between these two variables. According to Purkey, the relationships between academic achievement and self-concept, self-image or self-esteem are divided into three categories (1970):

1. The relation between the self-concept and success in school
2. How the successful student views himself
3. How the unsuccessful students considers himself

Although the relationship between the academic achievement and self-concept has been studied by several researchers, there is not yet an agreement between the

causal order of this relationship. In other words, conclusions vary concerning the order of causality between self-concept and achievement; does low achievement affect self-concept; or does low self-concept influence achievement; or are the two concepts interrelated?

Research concerning the causal order between motivational goals, academic self-concept and academic achievement has proposed several explanatory models. The four models presented below explain the causal order between academic self-concept and academic achievement in different ways according to research findings (Barker, Dowson, & Mc Inerney, n.d.).

1. Skill developmental model: this model proposes that achievement (successful or unsuccessful) affects self-concept, and not self-concept as an influence on academic achievement (Konh, 1999).

2. Self-enhancing model: this model considers that self-concept is the factor that affects achievement, but self-concept is not influenced by achievement. If a person holds a positive self-concept it helps to increase the level of academic achievement (Helmke & Van Aken, 1995).

3. Reciprocal effects model: This model assumes that achievement and self-concept affect each other. If someone has a negative self-concept it can affect in a negative way their academic achievement and vice versa (Valentine & DuBois, 2005).

4. A model comprising external variables: this model maintains that some other external variables affect both self-concept and academic achievement. Researches who agree with this position include in their studies some moderating variables in order to find the relationship between the self-concept and academic achievement.

In their study, Barker, Dowson, & Mc Inerney (n.d.) took into account the variable of motivational goals in order to study the relationship between self-concept and English and Math academic achievement. They found that social goals had a negative effect on students' self-concept in the areas measured (English and Math), as well as in the academic achievement in these domains. On the other hand, mastery goals demonstrated to have a positive effect on the self-concept of students in relation to English and Math, and at the same time a positive effect on academic achievement of these two subjects. The findings show that when self-concept is affected positively or negatively academic achievement is affected in the same way.

Another important conclusion of Barker's study was that the causal order is different depending on the subject. In the case of English **students' self-concept was the channel through which goals affected academic achievement**. Thus, in relation to motivation as a factor, teachers should enhance students' goals in order to affect positively students' Self-concept on this area and finally improve students' academic achievement.

In the case of Math, researchers found that **goals were the channel through which self-concept affected achievement**. In this case, teachers can develop positive academic achievement by first improving students' self-concept in this domain in order to foster positive goals and thus affect the academic achievement of students.

By looking at the findings of this study we can conclude that the relation between academic achievement and self-concept was affected by a moderator variable, in this case, motivational goals whereby determining the relationship between the two concepts.

Researchers have also taken into account gender when looking at the relationship between academic achievement and self-concept (Purkey 1970). Other studies have focused on other factors such socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and social disability in order to determine if they have any effect on the relationship between academic achievement and self-concept.

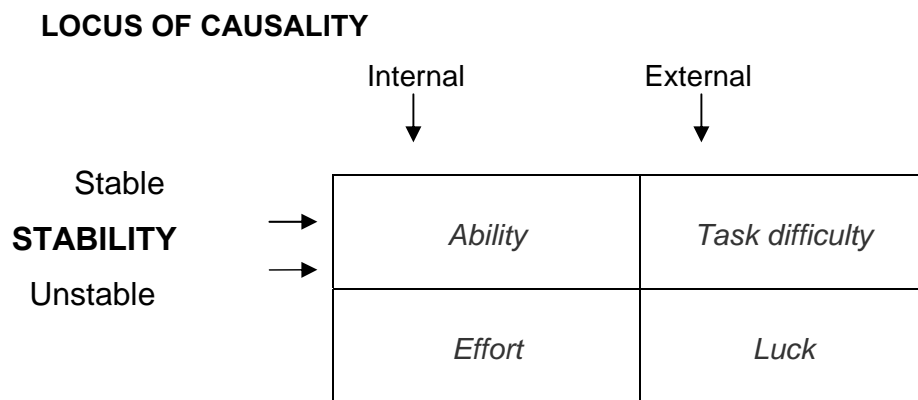
In this study, the term of academic achievement is defined as the level of proficiency a student can reach in the academic context as measured by satisfying proposed goals and objectives of the academic program. In this respect, academic achievement can be understood in a positive manner (high academic achievement) and also in a negative way (low academic achievement), depending on the level of proficiency attained by the student. It is important to say that the term low/poor academic achievement or underachievement is related to repeating or failing a course, since the student, in this case, did not accomplish the proposed objectives of the course.

ATTRIBUTION THEORY

Attribution theory, according to Weiner (1974, 1986, as cited in Williams & Burden, 1997), assumes that people interpret a situation and attribute some factors to the results obtained in that situation; in other words, it has to do with “the reasons a person attributes to their perceived success or failure in academic and other achievement situations”.

Weiner asserted that there are four main sets of attributions people tend to consider in a perceived successful or failing situation in life: ability, effort, task difficulty and luck. These attributions are classified in three different causal dimensions: locus of causality, stability, and controllability. To *locus of control* he refers as if the attributions are *external* or *internal*. Ability and effort are classified as internal factors, while luck and difficulty of the task are considered as external

attributions. *Stability*, on the other hand, has to do with the fact that if the factor in question can be or not changed, in this case ability and task difficulty are stable, and effort and luck unstable. Finally, the last dimension, *controllability* relates to causes one can control, such as effort, and causes one can not control, such as ability. Graphic 2 demonstrate how the four attributions, relates to the three dimensions proposed by Weiner.



The area of attributions is very important and has been widely applied in education. Through the application of this theory, teachers can better understand the reasons what students attribute their failure or success to, and in this sense to try to help them to overcome these difficulties. The teacher must look for ways to help students to gain confidence in learning, and to do this they must help them to take control over their own learning; to reflect over their experiences, in this case the academic ones; and in this way, to help them to view success or failure as unstable and controllable.

REPETITION

The issue on repetition is of great importance for the educational setting, although sometimes it seems to be underestimated. Research in this area has shown that repetition has a great impact on the self-esteem of students, or viceversa, that repeating a class does not increase the academic proficiency of students. (Bowman 2005)

In many cases there is an association between repeating or “flunking” a course and student self-concept (Alexander, Entwisle, and Dauber 1994, as cited in Bowman 2005). According to these researchers, repetition can have a negative effect on students in the way they view themselves as failures or incapable learners.

In the first semester of 2006 an interview was applied to some of the students who have failed and repeated some of the classes in the ELT program at the UIS. The findings demonstrated that low self-esteem, withdrawing from the University, delays in the normal academic process, and lowered motivation are some of the possible consequences of failing a subject.

On the other hand, based on analysis from that same interview it was also clear that the lack of subject knowledge, low English proficiency, poor study habits, a lack of motivation, being alone (without friends), teacher methodology, and a lack of resources, were given as other causes as to why students failed a subject.

Some students of the ELT program at the UIS believe that repeating a class is not always a good method to improve their skills in that subject or attain high levels of proficiency. Some other studies have demonstrated that not all the students who repeat a class learn more. (Bowman 2005)

Another finding in the literature relating to the issue of repetition or retention has to do with students withdrawing or dropping out of the University. According to Dawson (1998) dropping-out of school becomes a problem for both the individual

person and the society in general. Without the proper qualifications people cannot aspire to have good jobs, or good salaries and may be at higher risk for unemployment (1998).

Much research has been in this area exploring the causes and consequences of repeating subjects, while at the same time proposing solutions to the problem. The focus here is to not only think when it is appropriate for a student to repeat a class, but to help the student improve their academic achievement in order to prevent future failure (Jimerson 2001).

Based on a review of other research, Bowman (2005) presents in her paper some of the possible alternatives to grade repetition (retention) such as summer classes, tutoring, reevaluation of retention policies, reevaluation of methodologies and teachers expectations for students, revision of the curriculum, as well as implementation of new teaching and learning strategies. Although these kinds of proposals are closely related to retention at school, many of them can be adapted to the problem of repetition at University.

IMPORTANCE- PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

The Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) introduced by Martilla (1977, as cited in Huan and Beaman, nd) is a technique mostly used by the marketing sector to evaluate the elements of a specific program. Some of the advantages of the importance-performance analysis are the low-costs and that results are easily comprehended by lay audiences. The use of this technique provides insights about the characteristics or attributes that need more attention and improvement, thus informing effective marketing strategies and decisions, especially for those which have a high level of importance, but a low level of performance.

Another important point is that the results of IPA can indicate an area that needs further attention or in-depth research of the problematic areas in order to find solutions. On the other hand, the outcomes obtained by the use of IPA are directed only to the specific sample or population chosen for the study in question.

The current study hopes to make use of IPA in order to better understand the level of importance students place on certain attributes for being successful in the Suprasegmental Phonetics and Phonology I class based on their own perceptions. At the same time, students are asked to rate their own performance based on the same importance attributes. The hope is that the results will identify which attributes students need to work on in order to be more successful in the specific academic setting; in this case the Suprasegmental phonetics and phonology I class.

2. DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

The high level of repetition of certain subjects by many students in the English Language Teaching (ELT) program at the UIS is a very important topic that must be taken into account by teachers, students and academic staff. The causes of this situation may be related to lack of student motivation, students' self-concept, students' learning strategies, anxiety, teacher methodologies, language aptitude, teacher-student relationships, and teacher perceptions among others. As a result, high drop-out rates, low self-esteem, lack of motivation, delay in the academic process, fossilization of language, poor teacher-student relationships are some of the probable consequences of repetition.

This study tries to focus its attention on students' academic self-concept and on students' academic achievement in Suprasegmental phonetics and phonology I in the English Teaching Program at the UIS. The aim is to explore and describe how students perceive themselves as learners in relation to the failure of this class, and at the same time to know what they think of their performance taking into account some attributes they rate as important requirements to be successful performance in this class.

I consider this project could give teachers, students, and also academic administrators a view of the problem from a different standpoint.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the students' academic self-concept and academic achievement in the Suprasegmental phonetics and phonology I of the ELT program at the UIS in relation to the repetition of this subject and the possible deficiencies they have in the subject.

3. OBJECTIVES

- 1.** To enquire as to how students view and perceive themselves as learners based on a survey to measure their academic self-concept in the Suprasegmental phonetics and phonology I class.
- 2.** To compare the academic self-concept of students who have failed the class to those who are taking it for the first time.
- 3.** To detect what factors students attribute their performance to.
- 4.** To measure students' perceived importance and performance in the Suprasegmental Phonetics and Phonology I class, in relation to some attributes considered as important for being successful in the subject mentioned, in order to identify areas that need improvement.

4. JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH

According to the Colombian General Law of Education: Law 115 February 8th 1994, (General dispositions, article 1, Law objective), "...education is founded in the integral conception of the human person..."¹ That is, education not only focuses on intellectual aspects, but also psychological, emotional, spiritual, and moral development among others.

It has been demonstrated by different studies that the teaching and learning processes can be altered or influenced by the presence of different variables which can be related to the nature of teacher, students, or classroom environment.

As in this case, the study pretends to explore and describe students' academic self-concept and academic achievement in phonetics and phonology II in relation to the problem of repeating this subject in the ELT program at the UIS.

It is hoped that the results of this study can assist teachers and students evaluate their teaching and learning processes respectively. This research also hopes to identify whether there is an agreement between what students believe is important to be successful in the subject and how they are performing in relation to that perception. This research will give academic staff the opportunity to better understand what students think about the phonetics and phonology class; one of the most failed subjects in the program. These results can be used to propose some solutions regarding to the syllabus structure of the class and thus enhance process of education.

¹ Ley General de Educación: ley 115 Febrero 8 de 1994. título 1: disposiciones generales, artículo 1. Objetivo de la Ley.

It is important to be conscious of the problems students face throughout their education in order to help them achieve their goals. It is also important to prevent unnecessary repetition or failure of this subject.

Another important concern is that there is little scientific evidence about the topic of repetition and it is urgently needed in order to inform academic staff. It is also for teachers and students in order they can reflect on their own processes of teaching and learning.

The official results of the second semester of 2004, and the first and second semester of 2005 about the percentages of students' failure of subjects at the ELT program at the UIS are a good reason to investigate in this area in order not only to understand and explain the problem in relation to an affective variable as is the case of students' self-concept, but also to find some solutions with respect to this situation.

5. RESEARCH DESIGN

The present research project will be grounded on a descriptive research design since the interest of the researcher is to find out about an existing phenomenon related to language and behavior occurring inside a natural context. In this case the students' academic self-concept and performance in the Suprasegmental phonetics and phonology I class in relation to the repetition of this subject will be described. The data collected for this research will be explicitly described without any manipulation of the variables.

6. METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS AND SETTINGS.

The current descriptive research took place at the Universidad Industrial de Santander in April, 2007 during the first academic semester of the mentioned year. The sample considered for the study was chosen at random from one of the Suprasegmental Phonetics and Phonology I class from the ELT program at UIS.

This sample consisted of six students who represented two different groups: group 1 was composed by three students who failed the Suprasegmental Phonetics and Phonology I class and who were repeating the class for the second time; and group 2 was composed by three students who were taking this subject for the first time.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Four different instruments were used for the purpose of data collection of the current project. The first one is an Importance scale; it was used to ask students to rate attributes related to the phonetics and phonology class as being important or not important, based on their own perceptions. This instrument includes 13 items related to the requirements for being successful in phonetics and phonology II, and a scale of four possible answers used to rate each item: (sin importancia/ no tan importante/ importante/ muy importante). (SEE APPENDIX FOR SURVEY QUESTIONS).

The second instrument is an Academic Self-concept scale. This scale was administered to gather data related to the level of students' academic self-concept in phonetics and phonology II. The Academic Self-concept scale is divided into

three different areas: self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-image. This instrument includes 28 items and a scale of four different answers (totalmente de acuerdo/ de acuerdo/ en desacuerdo/ totalmente de acuerdo). This test gives us a score about the total level of academic self-concept of a student, but at the same time it allows us to know the score of each one of the three levels that conforms the whole instrument. (SEE APPENDIX FOR SURVEY QUESTIONS).

A performance scale was included in this study as a third data collection instrument. This scale was used to ask students about their performance in the phonetics and phonology II class. It includes 13 items, and a scale with four possible answers used to rate each one of the items presented: (nunca/ algunas veces/ casi siempre/ siempre). This instrument is directly related to the Importance scale described above. While the Importance scale asks students how important X is for them, the performance scale asks students how they feel they are performing in a particular attribute of the Importance scale. The answers are based on students' perceptions about the phonetics and phonology II class and at the same time about the perceptions of their own performance in this class. These two instruments are useful to know if there is an agreement or a contradiction between what students consider as an important requirement to be successful in the phonetics and phonology II class and how they are performing in relation to that attribute. These tools can also be used to identify areas that need improvement. (SEE APPENDIX FOR SURVEY QUESTIONS).

Finally, a short semi-structured interview was administered to all participants as a complement to the other survey instruments. This interview included open ended questions relating to students' perceptions and experiences of success or failure in the phonetics and phonology class. (SEE APPENDIX FOR INTERVIEW GUIDE).

PROCEDURE

The six students were asked to participate in the research project about academic self-concept related to the Suprasegmental Phonetics and Phonology I class, by filling out three different questionnaires associated to the topic to be studied. In addition, they were asked to answer a short semi-structured interview concerning their experiences/perceptions of the course etc.

The information was gathered in two different sessions. During the first session, all 6 students were asked to fill out an importance-performance survey as well as an academic self-concept survey (see appendix). Respondents rated the Importance level of each attribute on a 4 point likert scale (1= sin importancia, 2= no tan importante, 3= importante, 4= muy importante). Students evaluated their Performance level related to the same attributes on another 4 point likert scale, in terms of frequency (1= nunca, 2= algunas veces, 3= casi siempre, 4= siempre).

The importance survey was assigned first, then the academic self-concept survey, and finally the performance section was given to the students. The importance-performance survey was separated in order that students would not confuse the two surveys taking into account that they both asked the same questions.

Students were allowed twenty minutes to complete the 3 instruments. Having completed the surveys, each student arranged an appointment for the second session, the personal interview.

The personal interviews were carried on an individual basis that was convenient for each student. The duration of the interviews was between 10 and 20 minutes, according to the disposition of each student. Each participant was given the appointment at a different time, in order that students were not biased by the answers of the other participants. Each personal interview was composed by open

ended questions that were intended to elicit students answers related to the surveys above mentioned, and then to see if there was coherence among all the answers given by the participants of the study.

7. ANALYSIS OF DATA

In order to carry out the analysis regarding to the Academic Self-concept scale this study made use of the statistical program SPSS 12.0. The results concerning to students' levels of academic self-concept were given in terms of an Academic Self-Concept Score.

In order to provide students with an Academic Self-Concept Score, each answer on the survey (totalmente de acuerdo; de acuerdo; en desacuerdo; y totalmente en desacuerdo) was given a numerical value of 1 to 4. The highest numerical value of 4 was given to what was considered to be the most correct answer and the lowest numerical value of 1 was given to what was considered the least correct answer. After assigning each answer with a score the sum of the answers could then be calculated providing a total score for the survey.

For the Academic Self-Concept Survey the highest possible score was 112 while the lowest possible score was 28. The total scores were then divided into three categories of "high", "medium", and "low", in order classify students' academic self-concept. Since the Academic Self-Concept Survey is comprised of three dimensions (self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-image) it was necessary to follow the same process of classification described above to analyze the level of each dimension in the survey.

For the entire Academic Self-Concept Survey, the categories high, medium, and low were determined by the following scores:

Low > 28- 37

Medium > 38- 74

High > 75- 112

For the dimensions Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy (where the maximum score was 36 and the minimum 9); the categories were determined by the following scores:

Low > 9- 12

Medium > 13- 24

High > 25- 36

With respect to the third dimension, Self-Image, (where the maximum score was 40 and the minimum 10); the categories were determined by the following scores:

Low > 10- 14

Medium > 15- 27

High > 28- 40

In order to carry out the analysis regarding the Importance-Performance Scale, this study made use of the spreadsheet program Excel. Again, each answer on the Importance-Performance scale was given a value from 1 to 4 as explained in the procedure section.

Importance-Performance means were calculated in order to plot them on a two-dimensional grid. Importance is represented by the Y axis, while Performance is represented by the X axis. The grid that was produced was then divided up into four quadrants that are related to the areas of improvement. Each point obtained by the importance and performance means was then plotted in the correspondent quadrant according to its mean score. Each one of the four quadrants is explained below:

► **Concentrate here** quadrant contains all the variables in which students present a high importance level, but a poor performance level.

► **Keep up the good work** quadrant means high importance and high performance.

► **Low priority** quadrant indicates low importance, and poor performance.

► **Possible overkill** quadrant represents low importance, but high performance.

The placement of the grid lines that separates the quadrants is arbitrary and it must be related to the interests and objectives of the study. In this case, the grid lines were placed on the value of 3 in the X-Y scale, considering it as good, and 4 as excellent.

With regard to analyzing the semi-structured interviews, after they were transcribed, the participants' responses were reviewed. Later, a summary of all responses for each one of the questions was listed.

8. RESULTS

ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT

Table 1 demonstrates the general Academic Self-Concept level of each one of the participants of the study (groups 1 and 2). It also considers each one of the three dimensions assessed within the instrument: self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-image.

Table 1. Participants' Academic Self-concept levels.

Subjects	Condition	Self-esteem	Self-efficacy	self-image	General Academic Self-concept
A	repitente	28- alto	27- alto	27- medio	82- alto
B	repitente	28- alto	36- alto	30- alto	94- alto
C	no repitente	26- alto	33- alto	23- medio	82- alto
D	no repitente	26- alto	31- alto	27- medio	84- alto
E	no repitente	29- alto	34- alto	31- alto	94- alto
F	repitente	28- alto	28- alto	33- alto	89- alto

The results in figure 1 show no differences in the level of Academic Self-concept between group 1 (students who were repeating the subject) and group 2 (students who were taking this subject for the first time). Similarly, in the dimensions Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy all the students appeared to have a high level. On the other hand, the results obtained from the dimension of the self-image demonstrated that 3 out of 6 students appear to have a medium level (2 students who are taking the class for the first time, and 1 who is repeating the subject), while the other 3 students appear to have a high level of Self-image.

According to the results, there is no doubt that the students from group 1, as well as those from group 2 have a high level of academic self-concept in the Suprasegmental Phonetics and Phonology I class.

Importance-Performance Analysis

Figure 1 illustrates the results of the Importance-Performance grid for both students from group 1 and 2, according to the means obtained for each one of the questions or attributes (see Table 2).

Figure 1. Importance-Performance Grid for all students.

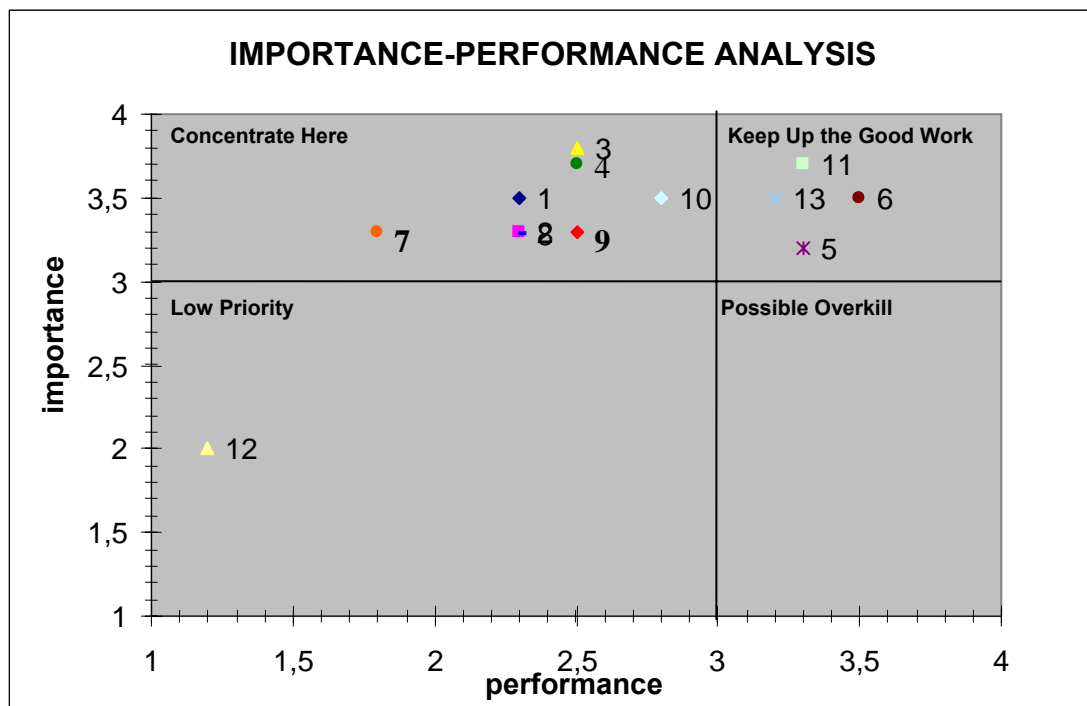


Table 2. Suprasegmental Phonetics and Phonology I Importance and Performance Means

CODE	ATTRIBUTES	IMPORTANCE MEAN	PERFORMANCE MEAN
1	Obtener buenas notas	3,5	2,3
2	Participar activamente en la clase	3,3	2,3
3	Saber pronunciar los sonidos del ingles	3,8	2,5
4	Saber discriminar los sonidos del ingles	3,7	2,5
5	Trabajar con entusiasmo	3,2	3,3
6	Ser responsable	3,5	3,5
7	Utilizar la ayuda del profesor	3,3	1,8
8	Utilizar recursos y materiales fuera de clase	3,3	2,3
9	Estudiar con anterioridad	3,3	2,5
10	Tener habilidad para aprender los conceptos de la materia	3,5	2,8
11	Esforzarse por aprender	3,7	3,3
12	Ser elogiados por el profesor para sentirse motivados	2	1,2
13	Mostrar interés por la asignatura	3,5	3,2

Looking at the grid in Table 1, questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, and 10 were plotted in the concentrate here quadrant of the grid. This signifies that students considered these attributes as being highly important to them, while at the same time reporting that they perform relatively poor in relation to these same attributes.

The attributes plotted in this quadrant are extremely relevant considering that students rated those attributes as highly important for them but seem to have a poor level in relation to the performance of such attributes. As a result, the attributes in this quadrant should be targeted for improved performance.

Considering the existing differences between group 1 and 2 in relation to time exposed to the content of the Suprasegmental Phonetics and Phonology I class, it

was necessary to create two separate grids to observe whether or not there were possible differences between the two groups.

Figure 2 represents the results for group 1 (students who were repeating the subject), while Figure 3 stands for the results for group 2 (students who were taking the class for the first time)

Figure 2. Importance-Performance grid for students who were repeating the subject

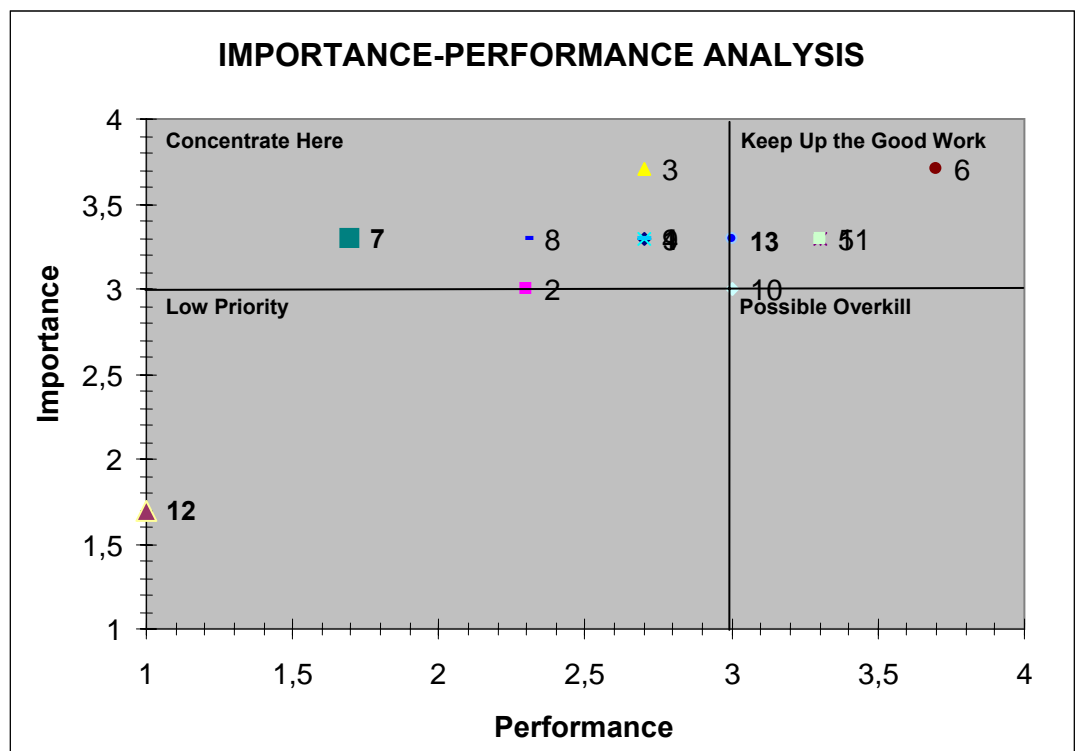


Table 3. Importance-Performance ratings for students who were repeating the Suprasegmental Phonetics and Phonology I class.

CODE	VARIABLE	IMPORTANCE MEAN	PERFORMANCE MEAN
1	Obtener buenas notas	3,3	2,7
2	Participar activamente en la clase	3	2,3
3	Saber pronunciar los sonidos del ingles	3,7	2,7
4	Saber discriminar los sonidos del ingles	3,3	2,7
5	Trabajar con entusiasmo	3,3	3,3
6	Ser responsable	3,7	3,7
7	Utilizar la ayuda del profesor	3,3	1,7
8	Utilizar recursos y materiales fuera de clase	3,3	2,3
9	Estudiar con anterioridad	3,3	2,7
10	Tener habilidad para aprender los conceptos de la materia	3	3
11	Esforzarse por aprender	3,3	3,3
12	Ser elogiados por el profesor para sentirse motivados	1,7	1
13	Mostrar interés por la asignatura	3,3	3

Figure 3. Importance-Performance grid for students who were taking the Suprasegmental Phonetics and phonology I class the first time.

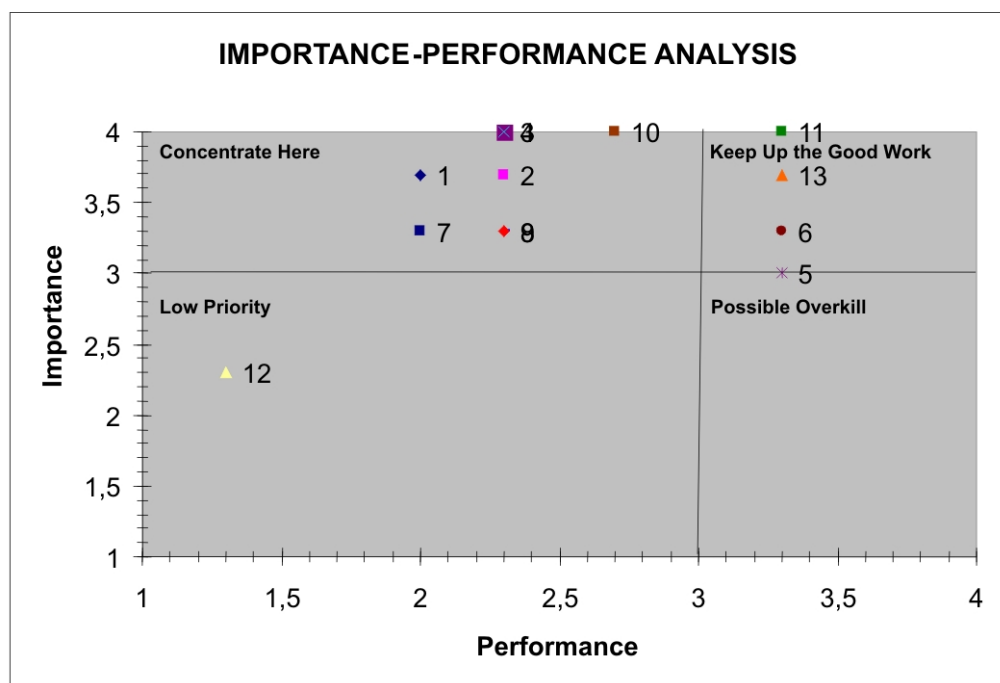


Table 4. Importance-Performance ratings for students who were taking the Suprasegmental Phonetics and Phonology I class.

CODE	VARIABLE	IMPORTANCE MEAN	PERFORMANCE MEAN
1	Obtener buenas notas	3,7	2
2	Participar activamente en la clase	3,7	2,3
3	Saber pronunciar los sonidos del ingles	4	2,3
4	Saber discriminar los sonidos del ingles	4	2,3
5	Trabajar con entusiasmo	3	3,3
6	Ser responsable	3,3	3,3
7	Utilizar la ayuda del profesor	3,3	2
8	Utilizar recursos y materiales fuera de clase	3,3	2,3
9	Estudiar con anterioridad	3,3	2,3
10	Tener habilidad para aprender los conceptos de la materia	4	2,7
11	Esforzarse por aprender	4	3,3
12	Ser elogiados por el profesor para sentirse motivados	2,3	1,3
13	Mostrar interés por la asignatura	3,7	3,3

Figures 2 and 3, linked to groups 1 and 2 respectively, appear to have no relevant differences between them. In both group 1 and group 2 the questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9 are plotted within the *“concentrate here”* quadrant; except for question number 10 which is placed in the *“keep up the good work”* quadrant by the students of group 1.

In all three Importance-Performance grids questions 5, 6, 11, and 13 are plotted in the quadrant *“keep up the good work”*; although, as mentioned above, the grid for students from group 1 also includes in this quadrant question 10.

Concerning to the quadrant *“low priority”* all the results (figure 1, 2, and 3) include only question 12 in it; while the *“possible overkill”* quadrant is totally empty; without any questions included.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Regarding the first question of the semi-structured interview which asks students the meaning of **being successful in the suprasegmental phonetics and phonology I class**, all of them agreed that being successful has to do with passing the subject with good marks. Students also said that being successful in the class meant that they understand and learn the material for their whole life in order to apply this knowledge in the future; not just passing over the subject, but having good grasp of it.

The responses to the second question about the **factors which influence the success of the phonetics and phonology class**, students consider it important to work with enthusiasm; to know how to pronounce and discriminate the sounds of English; to ask the teacher for explanation; to have interest for the subject; and to study before each class. However, looking at the frequency of these responses, 5 out of the 6 students said that the most important factor that determined success in the phonetics and phonology class was their individual ability to learn the related concepts.

Students also consider that there are other factors which are important for being successful in the phonetics and phonology class. The training or preparation of teachers, as well as the teacher attitude, are important issues that relate to the motivation of students. In relation to this one student stated: *“Me parece que cuenta mucho el profesionalismo del docente, la preparación, cuando un docente sabe todo uno se motiva más... La actitud del profesor, por ejemplo cuando son todos arrogantes, uno no se siente motivado en la materia.”* In addition, the training of the teacher influences the quality of the class: *“hay muchos profesores que no se desenvuelven correctamente, que no saben como explicar las cosas”*.

Other important concerns related to the fact of being successful in the phonetics and phonology class are the students' attendance and discipline.

Students also point out the importance of having English bases. One student said: *“saber ingles, saber vocabulario. Fonética e ingles están relacionadas directamente, es necesario tener bases de ingles para entender los conceptos de la fonética.”*

On the other hand, in relation to the **students' academic performance**, 5 out of 6 students consider their performance as good due to different factors such as their responsibility in the class; the previous study of the topics; their practice; and in some cases their interest. The other student believes her performance is just regular and attributes it to the fact of failing the first exam of the class; although she passed all the quizzes taken during the first period of the current semester. Another significant reason, given by a student who is repeating the course to explain their performance in the subject which was classified as good, is the fact of repeating the subject once again, she comments: *“...creo que tengo una ventaja sobre los otros en el sentido en que yo ya vi esos temas y uno ya sabe más o menos como son las cosas.”*

For the question regarding why students' performance was not excellent they responded that it is a result of not enough practice; not enough time to study; the difficulty of the topics; the grades they got in their exams; and even the fact of repeating the subject are factors that count. Consider the comment from one of the students who is repeating the subject: *“...yo pensé que por haber visto esos temas antes tenía una ventaja, y en la parte de discriminación yo no solo incluí los temas que hemos visto ahora sino también los que yo ya vi el semestre pasado y que los otros no han visto todavía, y entonces hice un revuelto de cosas que no debí haber hecho; en ese sentido estar repitiendo fonética se me convierte a mi en una desventaja...”*

Among the difficulties students face in the phonetics class, one of the students asserted that the lack of vocabulary related to the topics studied during the class is a disadvantage for understanding the content of the class; the rest of the students consider that the most outstanding difficulty is related to the ability of discriminate, transcribe, and produce the sounds of English.

Finally, some students made remarks about the class saying that teachers should come to an agreement about the kind of pronunciation to be taught or emphasized to during the program, and especially in the phonetics and phonology courses, in order to avoid confusion. Regarding this a student said: *“A veces uno pronuncia una palabra pero con pronunciación americana y el profesor le dice a uno que esta mal porque no lo está pronunciando en británico, o al revés; entonces uno dice, pero porque si yo sé que lo estoy haciendo bien, lo único es que lo hago con otra pronunciación.”* According to this student, this situation influences student motivations and grades.

It is important to increase the practice in the laboratory: *“...la única manera de corregirme es estando en clase para que la profesora me corrija si lo estoy haciendo bien o no...”*.

The material the teacher gives the students to complement the class is also relevant for them.

According to another student, teachers should emphasize practice rather than theory.

It would be important for teachers to be careful with the dynamics of the class in a classroom where the population is conformed by students who are repeating the class and those who are taking it for the first time: *“Creo que el contexto influye mucho también. Cuando uno está con repitentes la profesora no hace tanto*

énfasis en los temas porque ellos ya los han visto. Además los repitentes saben más, no solo de los temas, sino también de cómo es la clase, como son los previos y todo eso”.

The class is interesting as well as important to have a good pronunciation; and it is also a fundamental part of our formation as teachers. But it is clear that there is a link between their perceptions of the subject and the way they feel about it: *“La clase es bacana, pero seria más bacana si me fuera bien...”*

9. DISCUSSION

ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT

According to the results of the Academic Self-Concept survey, both the students who were taking the phonetics class for the first time, and those who were repeating the class reported a high level of academic self-concept. Thus, there was no significant difference in reported Academic Self-Concept among the two groups. Adding the total scores of each one of the two groups, one may see that the difference in numbers between the two groups is just of five points, and no relevant.

The possible explanation related to the similarities of reported Academic Self-Concept among the participants may be the past experiences of failure and/or success of each participant of the study. These experiences can be a variable that influences the results obtained from the survey in the way students perceive themselves. According to Purkey, the Self-Concept one holds about himself is related to the past experiences of success or failure. In other words, a person may hold a negative self-concept after he has experienced failure; while students who have had successful experiences tend to hold a better Self-Concept.

Although the surveys did not include a question related to the past experiences of success or failure of each student, it is important to remember that the half of the participants of the current project already failed the Supragmental Phonetics and Phonology I class, what can be categorized as a failure situation taking into consideration that those students did not attain the objectives of the class.

One possible reason for those students to have the same level of Academic Self-Concept might be that those who failed the class do not consider this experience

as a negative situation, but as a positive one, taking into account that for them being successful is to appropriate the topics and the knowledge corresponding to the current subject and not just passing it by. According to their answers about what it means for them being successful in the Suprasegmental Phonetics and Phonology I class, one can infer that they consider failing the class as a part of the process of learning phonetics and phonology, especially when they consider they do not have learn what they need to learn.

The problem here is that teachers, as well as students may hold different concepts or standards for failure and success. For many teachers, one learner faces a failure when he or she does not attain the objectives already set for the class, and those objectives must be measurable in order to give the students the passport to the next level, or course. That is why, it is really necessary to consider that not only the teacher can know the level of achievement of a learner by the grades obtained, but also by the whole process evidenced during the course.

It is also essential to recognize that the attributions students make about the factors involved in their success or failure can be another reason related to their Self-Concept. When a learner believes he can influence and control his own learning process, this person is more likely to succeed in school and to have a better Academic Self-concept than those who rather think their learning and results depend on external factors.

The participants of this study consider they have control over the results they wish to get in the P&P I class. They attribute their performance, labeled as “good”, to the effort they made, and the time they invested outside the class. But they assume that not having an excellent performance was due to the degree in which they did those activities. Students argue they have to put much more effort in the activities to succeed, what means that they consider success and failure as unstable and controllable. This may give as a good reason to interpret the results in the level of

their Academic self-Concept; students can improve their outcomes as always they consider they can control the factors to which they attribute their success or failure. And when they recognize they have the control over their learning, they feel more confident in themselves.

STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE

According to the semi-structured interviews, students responded to the question regarding how they considered their performance in the Phonetics and Phonology class, and at the same time, to what factors they attribute their performance. Five out of six students evaluated their performance as good; just one out of the six students answered it was regular.

Although the participants considered that their performance in the class was due to their responsibility in the subject; the previous study of the new topics; the practice of the concepts seen in each session; and in some cases their interests; they said that the fact of not having an excellent performance in this class was related to the degree in which they put into practice all these factors already mentioned.

According to Burns (1982, as cited in Alpay, E.) self-esteem is raised or maintained by the academic success, but at the same time, self-esteem influences academic performance through higher expectations and motivations. So probably the problem in this situation is that students are not performing so well because of their level of expectations related to the class or their level of motivation. For example a student may have a high level of academic self-concept, but if he holds low expectations and motivations regarding to the task he may underachieve in it.

The participants in this study appears to have a high level of Academic Self-Concept, but probably when they have to do a task or an activity their expectations for these activities are not fulfilled. This situation make them feel not only

unmotivated, but in some cases can make them feel so confident that they do not want to put too much effort or interest on it.

Different research studies in the area of self-concept have demonstrated the importance of it in relation to students' performance and achievement in a determined academic context. However, too much attention or emphasis on this area may be, in some cases, not appropriate. Sometimes a learner considers himself as a very good student in a specific area, that he does not need to prepare for an important examination when, in fact, he needs it; in this case his positive self-regard may be not only unrealistic, but also detrimental to his chances of passing that examination. (Purkey, W., 1970)

In relation to the participants of the current study, this situation could be applicable. Students appear to have a high level of Academic Self-concept, but at the same time they feel their performance is not as good as they wish. One reason may be related to the fact that students feel so confident with themselves that they think they do not really need to well prepare for the different activities required for the class.

Some students from the two groups also argued that those who were taking the class for the second time had an advantage over those students who were taking it for the first time. They coincided in saying that having been in a previous Phonetics course makes you feel better prepared, especially in cases where the teacher is the same. Students who repeat the class know beforehand the methodology the teacher applies in the course; the way he/she prepares the evaluations, and the way in which learners are assessed; the topics studied; and what the teacher expects of them.

Even more important, those students who repeat classes already know the topics seen in the class. This perhaps makes them feel more confident about the knowledge and objectives needed to pass the course.

With regards to this, it is also important to say that repeating a subject is not always favorable to students. In some cases, repeating a class may be a factor that decreases students' motivation, thus making students miss the classes, being irresponsible, and avoiding spending extra time practicing outside the class and getting ready for each session.

Some participants who were taking the class for the first time said that in some occasions the teacher took the topics for granted and did not emphasize or explained thoroughly the basic concepts, considering that most of the class was composed of students who were repeating the course.

There is no doubt that this practice is detrimental to student learning and should be avoided. It is necessary to allow students who failed the course to overcome their difficulties in this area, and at the same time to introduce the knowledge related to the subject to those who take the class for the first time. In any case, this is not only a matter of thinking about the correct methodology of teaching in a class that is comprised of students who have different experiences in the area of phonetics and phonology with those who are taking it for their first time. It is also a matter of preventing students from failing the course again and continuing the circle of retention and failure.

Among the factors that affects students' success in the phonetics and phonology class, one of the most important seems to be their proficiency in the foundations of English that they bring into the class. According to many students in the study, the level of English a student has is imperative for being successful in the Phonetics and Phonology class. Many of them argue that it is extremely difficult to understand

the basic concepts of the P&P class when one does not have good foundations of English, considering that the whole class, the presentations of the topics and explanations are in English.

IMPORTANCE-PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

In relation to the results of the importance-performance analysis, the teacher should direct their attention to those features placed in the concentrate here quadrant (high importance, low performance), to improve those features which are regarded as weaknesses.

Those attributes, mentioned above, placed in the “Concentrate Here” quadrant are very important but indicate low satisfaction in relation to the performance of students. Due to the lower performance of those attributes, they required more work and attention by the teacher as well as by the students. It is important to focus on each one of the attributes, and find some strategies that help learners to overcome their difficulties related to the areas in problem.

By paying attention to the “Keep up the Good Work” Teachers and all the academic staff, including the students, may visualize the attributes in which their importance as well as their performance represent a high level. It is significant if teachers and students reflect on them to analyze the strategies and techniques they consider they are applying in regard to these attributes, and to reflect if there are any possibilities of using the same strategies to improve other areas that represent problems.

Regarding to the “Low Priority” quadrant, only 1 of 13 attributes was place in here, attribution number 12 (Ser elogiados por el profesor para sentirse motivados). This factor does not have a significant influence on students, considering that they evaluated it such as an attribute with low importance and performance. However, it

would be important that teachers and students pay attention to it especially when it always has been considered by different studies that the extrinsic motivation plays a very important part in the development and proficiency of students.

Finally, there was no found any attribute in the quadrant related to “Possible overkill” which indicates that attributes that fall in here are rated as having a high performance, but low importance.

The utility of this technique has been always applied in the area of marketing, but through this study it has been demonstrate that it also can be very useful for the Educational system, and can be considered as a support for teachers and academic staff, in order to recognize what factors or areas are in need of improvement, or which ones are not requiring too much effort and investment of resources.

10. CONCLUSIONS

The study of self-concept in relation to student failure/repetition is an issue of great importance for the educational field. It has to do not only with the way each person views himself or herself as a learner in an specific academic context, but also with the way each individual views himself in their own world. Thus, the way each person considers themselves within these contexts plays an important role in the construction of both self-concept and academic self-concept.

Each person considers themselves in a different manner, and responds to learning depending on the way they perceive themselves. That is why, the task of the teachers, although complex is to help students recognize their own learning strategies so that they can become better and more confident learners, and they may construct a positive image of themselves as learners in order to respond to the demands of the educational context.

When students have a clear image of themselves it is easier for them to find the best ways and strategies to tackle the difficulties they may find when facing a new learning situation. It is also relevant to help students to gain control over the events of their lives, and to help them to build a positive idea about what can be considered as failure or success.

Considering the results obtained by the analysis of the instruments applied to explore students Academic Self-Concept no significant difference was found between the two groups implicated in the study. Both, students who were repeating the Phonetics and Phonology I class, as well as those who were taking it for the first time appear to have a high level of Academic Self-Concept.

However, related to these findings there seems to be a contradiction considering that the half of the individuals implicated in the research have had to repeat the class for the second time.

Other research in this area, it has demonstrated that there is an existing relationship between academic performance and/or achievement and the way students perceive and view themselves as learners, no matter the causal order of these factors (Barker, Dowson, & Mc Inerney, n.d.). In this respect, it would be necessary to explore some other factors such as the learning strategies; students' and teachers' expectations; teaching strategies; and students' attributions and motivations, in order to better understand the current situation.

Another possible explanation of the outcomes obtained can be related to the reliability of the data. Perhaps the findings can be a result of students' social desirability. For that reason it would be important to find a way to analyze in detail if the answers given by the participants correspond to the true perception students have of themselves as learners, or if they feel they are just responding to what they think the researcher wants to hear.

Different factors such as the responsibility in the class; the time invested for previous study of the topics; and their interest for the new issues of the subject, were considered important regarding students performance in the class. These factors appear to be under individuals' control taking into account that for them not having an excellent performance in the class is related to the level of effort they make for being successful.

The application of the Importance-Performance analysis was very useful in order to know if there were any relationship between the attributes students considered really important to be successful in the class, and the way they were performing in relation to those attributes. This technique can serve as diagnostic tool in order to

know which are the areas or attributes that present problems for students. Considering that those problematic features are the ones which students rate as being high important, but in which they perform poorly.

This technique already mentioned, can help teachers to evaluate some features that seem to be relevant for learning or being successful in any class, in relation to the way students are performing in it by recognizing the problematic areas and find strategies that can help learners to tackle their difficulties.

The findings of this study would be a starting point for exploring the areas related to students` academic self-concept, and achievement and performance in relation to a specific academic context.

REFERENCES:

- Alpay, E. Self-concept and Self-esteem. Retrieved September 13, 2006, URL: [http://
www.imperial.ac.uk/chemicalengineering/common_room/files/PsychEd_6.pdf](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/chemicalengineering/common_room/files/PsychEd_6.pdf)
- Barker, K.L., Dowson, M, & Mc Inerney, D.M. Effects Between Motivational Goals, Academic Self-Concept and Academic Achievement: What is the Causal Ordering?. *SELF Research Centre, University of Western Sydney, Australia*. Retrieved September 30, 2006. URL: www.aare.edu.au/05pap/bar05373.pdf
- Bowman, L. J., (2005). *Grade retention: Is it a Help or Hindrance to student academic success?*. Preventing school failure. 49 (3), p.p 42, 5. Washington.
- Dawson, P. (1998, June). *A primer on student grade retention: What the research says*. NASP Communique, 28, 8.
- Helmke, A. & van Aken, M.A.G. (1995). *The causal ordering of academic achievement and self-concept of ability during elementary school: A longitudinal study*. Journal of Educational Psychology, 87,
- IIEP Forum on Repetition. from 21 June to 9 July 1999.
URL: <http://www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/training/virtual/repforum.htm>
- Jimerson, S. R. (2001). *Meta-analysis of grade retention research: Implications for practice in the 21st century*. School Psychology Review, 30(3), 420-437.

- Kohn, A. (1999). *Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A's, praise and other bribes*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Martilla, A. John, and James, C. John. (Jan., 1977) Importance- Performance Analysis. *Journal of Marketing* 41 (1), 77- 79. Retrieved March 17, 2007, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/>
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Purkey, W. (1970). *Self Concept and School Achievement*. New Jersey: Englewoods Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, inc.
- Roach, Peter (2002). *English Phonetics and Phonology: A practical course*. (3rd ed.) London: Cambridge University Press.
- Valentine, J.C., & DuBois, D.L. (2005). *Effects of self-beliefs on academic achievement and vice versa: Separating the chicken from the egg*. *The New Frontiers of Self Research*, 53-75.
- Williams, M., & Burden, R.L. (1997). *Psychology for Language Teachers: A Social Constructivism Approach*. (Chapter 3: what do teachers bring to the teaching-learning process). United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, M., & Burden, R.L. (1997). *Psychology for Language Teachers: A Social Constructivism Approach*. (Chapter 4: the contribution of the individual student to the learning process) United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

APPENDIX FOR SURVEY QUESTIONS

SECCION 1

Clasifique las siguientes afirmaciones según la importancia que tengan para usted relacionado con la siguiente oración.

Para desempeñarse exitosamente en la clase de fonética y fonología II los estudiantes deben:

	No tiene importancia	No tan importante	Importante	Muy importante
1. Obtener buenas notas				
2. Participar activamente en la clase				
3. Saber como pronunciar los sonidos del inglés correctamente				
4. Saber como discriminar los sonidos del inglés correctamente				
5. Trabajar con entusiasmo en los ejercicios de la clase				
6. cumplir con los compromisos de la clase				
7. Despejar las dudas y pedir ayuda al profesor durante las horas de consulta				
8. Utilizar los materiales y recursos existentes fuera de la clase				
9. Estudiar con anterioridad los temas a discutir en clase				
10. Tener habilidad para aprender los conceptos relacionados con la fonética				
11. Esforzarse por aprender				
12. Ser elogiados por el profesor para sentirse motivados				
13. Mostrar interés por los temas de la asignatura				

SECCION 2

¿Qué tan de acuerdo está con las siguientes afirmaciones? Por favor responda teniendo en cuenta la escala. Marque con una (X) su opción.

PREGUNTAS	Totalmente de acuerdo	De acuerdo	En desacuerdo	Totalmente en desacuerdo
1. Obtener buenas notas en fonética me hace sentir más admirado y valorado por mis compañeros.				
2. Tengo confianza en mí mismo cuando presento evaluaciones de fonética.				
3. Me siento ridículo imitando otros acentos.				
4. Considero que la suerte influye a la hora de pasar los exámenes de fonética.				
5. Mi participación en las clases de fonética aporta nuevas miradas a los temas.				
6. Cuando debo pronunciar palabras que no conozco dudo de poder hacerlo bien.				
7. Me siento invisible en la clase de fonética.				
8. Los errores que cometo en la clase me afectan emocionalmente.				

9. Me avergüenza pedir ayuda cuando no entiendo.				
PREGUNTAS	Totalmente de acuerdo	De acuerdo	En desacuerdo	Totalmente en desacuerdo
10. Mi rendimiento en fonética depende de mi propio esfuerzo.				
11. Me propongo obtener buenas notas en la clase de fonética.				
12. Cuando me esfuerzo por pronunciar los sonidos adecuadamente sueno natural.				
13. Cuando trabajo con ánimos en la clase de fonética noto que mi rendimiento académico mejora.				
14. Cuando cumplo con mis compromisos académicos para la clase obtengo mejores resultados.				
15. Yo sé cómo se aprende fonética.				
16. El profesor de fonética es otro recurso para mí.				
17. Cuando utilizo los recursos existentes fuera de la clase para estudiar fonética me siento más seguro de lo que sé.				
18. Estudiar con anticipación los temas que se van a discutir en la clase de fonética me hace sentir más preparado.				

19. Me preocupa lo que piensen de mí cuando cometo errores.				
20. Aprendo fácilmente los conceptos relacionados con la fonética.				
21. Se me facilita pronunciar y discriminar los sonidos del inglés.				
22. Me considero muy capaz y hábil en fonética.				
23. Considero que estoy entre los estudiantes con mejores notas en el curso de fonética.				
24. Me percibo como una persona a la cual se le facilita aprender la fonética.				
25. Me considero un estudiante responsable en la clase de fonética.				
26. Noto que mis resultados en la clase son mejores cada vez que yo me esfuerzo.				
27. Necesito que elogien mi desempeño en la clase de fonética para motivarme.				
28. Mi esfuerzo en la clase de fonética depende de que tan interesante me parezca el tema de la clase.				

SECCION 3

Las siguientes afirmaciones están relacionadas con su desempeño en la clase de fonética y fonología II. Por favor léalas con atención y clasifique cada una de las siguientes afirmaciones en la columna correspondiente según sea su caso particular.

	Nunca	Algunas veces	Casi siempre	Siempre
1. Obtengo buenas notas en la asignatura				
2. Participo activamente en la clase de fonética				
3. Pronuncio los sonidos del inglés correctamente				
4. Discrimino los sonidos del inglés correctamente				
5. Trabajo con ánimo en los ejercicios de la clase				
6. Yo soy responsable (cumpló con los trabajos) en la clase de fonética				
7. Cuando tengo dudas sobre un tema o necesito ayuda yo utilizo las horas de consulta de mi profesor de fonética				
8. Trabajo fuera de clase haciendo uso de los materiales y recursos existentes para estudiar fonética				
9. Estudio con anticipación los temas que vamos a discutir en clase				
10. Aprendo con facilidad los conceptos relacionados con la fonética.				
11. Me esfuerzo en la clase de fonética				
12. Necesito que mi profesor de fonética me elogie.				
13. Muestro interés por los temas que se tratan en la asignatura				

APPENDIX FOR INTERVIEW GUIDE

(Suprasegmental phonetics and phonology I)

1. ¿Que significa para usted tener éxito en la materia de fonética y fonología II?
2. ¿Cuáles considera usted que son los factores más importantes que influyen para tener éxito en fonética II?
 - Elija tres ítems de la escala de importancia (Appendix for survey questions - section 1)
 - Explique la respuesta
 - ¿Hay algún otro factor que le parezca importante pero que no este incluido en la lista anterior?
3. ¿Cómo considera que es su desempeño en la clase de fonética?
 - Excelente
 - Muy bueno
 - Bueno
 - Regular
 - Malo
 - Pésimo
4. ¿A qué factores atribuye su desempeño en la clase de fonética?
5. (solo quienes no respondieron “excelente” a la pregunta 3). ¿Por qué cree que no es excelente su desempeño académico en fonética?