



**MOTIVATION AND ARABIC LEARNING
ACHIEVEMENT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY
BETWEEN TWO TYPES OF GANSU ISLAMIC
SCHOOLS IN CHINA**

BY

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of master of education
(Educational Psychology)**

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OCTOBER 2012

ABSTRACT

Motivation is one of the most highly studied issues within the field of L2 learning. A number of theories of motivation have been used to explain the effects of motivation on L2 learning. The Self-determination theory (SDT), a popular motivational theory developed by Ryan and Deci (1985), has been applied by many L2 researchers to explicate the relationship between motivation and L2 learning outcomes from social and psychological perspectives. In addition, SDT distinguishes intrinsic motivation from extrinsic motivation on L2 learning achievement. Bakar et al. (2010) in their study extended Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory to investigate the role of religious motivation in Arabic (L2) language learning achievement. This study sought to extend previous findings by examining the relationship between motivation aspects: Religious Motivation (RM), Internal Motivation (IM), External Motivation (EM), and Amotivation (AM) and Arabic language learning achievement. Specifically, it aims to a) explore factors that influence Arabic learning achievement and examine the relative contribution of the different aspects of motivation (RM, IM, EM and AM) on Arabic language learning achievement; b) investigate the relationship between those aspects; and c) compare the level of motivation across two subgroups of Arabic language learners. To achieve these purposes, 348 students were randomly selected from two types of Gansu Islamic schools in China to complete a 36-item questionnaire. Interviews were also conducted with four respondents to get more in-depth information as regards Arabic language learning. Qualitative analysis was conducted to answer the first research question, while the Rasch Measurement Model, independent sample t-test, Person correlations, and multiple regression analysis were utilized to answer the other research questions. The qualitative analyses indicated that there are some positive and negative factors (internal and external) that affect student learning of Arabic language either positively or negatively. Among the positive factors are religion, positive attitudes towards learning Arabic, and finding a more prestigious job. On the other hand, the negative factors include, lack of motivation to learn Arabic and the teaching methodology. The quantitative data showed significant correlations among all the motivation aspects except Amotivation. The multiple regression analyses indicated that AM and RM were significant predictors of Arabic language learning. To conclude, all the motivation aspects influence students' Arabic learning achievement either positively or negatively. Religion and a positive attitude towards Arabic language learning motivate students to do better in learning the language, while Amotivation and inappropriate teaching methodology deter students from learning Arabic effectively. Direct intervention and new learning and teaching strategies should be formulated to promote effective learning of Arabic language.

خلاصة البحث

تُعتبر الدافعية واحدةً من أهم القضايا التي يتم دراستها في مجال تعلم اللغة الثانية. حيث تم استخدام عدد من نظريات الدافعية لشرح أثارها المترتبة على تعلم اللغة الثانية. وقد قام العديد من الباحثين في تعلم اللغة الثانية بتطبيق نظرية تحديد/معرفة الذات، وهي نظرية معروفة في مجال الدافعية وضعها ريان وديسي (1985) في تفسير العلاقة بين الدافعية ونتائج تعلم اللغة الثانية من وجهة نظر اجتماعية ونفسية. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، تُميّز هذه النظرية بين الدافعية الذاتية والدافعية الخارجية في تحصيل اللغة الثانية. وأضاف بكر وآخرون (2010) الدافع الديني إلى نظرية ريان وديسي عند دراستهم لدوره في تحصيل اللغة العربية كلغة ثانية. لذلك فإن هذه الدراسة تسعى إلى توسيع نطاق نتائج الدراسات السابقة من خلال دراسة العلاقة بين الدافعية (الذاتية والخارجية و الدينية و قلة الدافعية)، وتحصيل اللغة العربية في نوعين من مدارس (قانسو) الإسلامية في الصين. الهدف الأول من هذه الدراسة هو تحديد العوامل التي تؤثر في تحصيل اللغة العربية ومعرفة مساهمة جوانب الدافعية المختلفة (الذاتية والخارجية و الدينية و قلة الدافعية) في هذا التحصيل. والهدف الثاني هو دراسة العلاقة بين هذه الجوانب المختلفة من الدافعية. والهدف الثالث هو مقارنة مستويات هذه الجوانب بين مجموعات من طلاب اللغة العربية. ولتحقيق هذه الأهداف، تم إختيار 348 طالبا بطريقة عشوائية من مدارس (قانسو) الإسلامية للإجابة على إستبيان يحتوي على 36 سؤالاً. وكذلك تم عقد مقابلات مع أربعة مشاركين للحصول على بيانات أكثر عمقا فيما يتعلق بتعلم اللغة العربية. وقد أجري التحليل النوعي للإجابة على سؤال الدراسة الأول، في حين تم استخدام نموذج راش للقياس، اختبارات المستقل، معامل بيرسون للارتباط، وتحليل الانحدار المتعدد للإجابة على أسئلة الدراسة الأخرى. أشارت التحليلات النوعية أن هناك بعض العوامل الإيجابية والسلبية (داخلية وخارجية) التي تؤثر على تعلم اللغة العربية سواء سلبا أو إيجابا. ومن بين العوامل الإيجابية هي الدين، والإتجاهات الإيجابية نحو تعلم اللغة العربية، والعثور على

وظيفة مرموقة. ومن بين العوامل السلبية هي عدم وجود الدافعية لتعلم اللغة العربية وطريقة التدريس. وأظهرت البيانات الكمية وجود إرتباطات ذات دلالة بين جميع جوانب الدافعية باستثناء جانب قلة الدافعية. وأشار تحليل الانحدار المتعدد أن الدافع الديني و قلة الدافعية عوامل تنبؤ لتعلم اللغة العربية. و خلاصة القول، أن جميع جوانب الدافعية تؤثر على تحصيل الطلاب في اللغة العربية إما سلبا أو إيجابا. وأن الدين والإتجاه الإيجابي نحو تعلم اللغة العربية يحفز ان الطلاب على القيام بعمل أفضل في تعلم اللغة، بينما قلة الدافعية وطرق التدريس الغير مناسبة تُعيق تعلم الطلاب للغة العربية على نحو فعّال. ومن أجل تعزيز التعلم الفعّال للغة العربية ينبغي التدخل مباشرة ووضع استراتيجيات تعليمية جديدة.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion; it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation of the degree of Master of Education (Educational Psychology).

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Rosnani Hashim
Director, Institute of Education

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the findings of this dissertation are the product of my research efforts. I also declare that it has not been previously or currently submitted as a whole for my other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Khadijah Qiao Juping

Signature.....

Date.....

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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**MOTIVATION AND ARABIC LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT: A
COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN TWO TYPES OF GANSU ISLAMIC
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Alhamdulillah, first and the foremost all praise be to Allah, the Almighty without whose guidance, this study would not have been possible. May He guide and bless me to greater heights, endow me with knowledge and wisdom and forgive me for my weaknesses. Peace and blessings be upon the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), his family and companions.

This dissertation records most of my journey towards obtaining a master degree over the past two years; I have learned a great deal how the mind works on L2 motivation. In addition, a big number of individuals that contributed to the success of this thesis, and I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to them.

Particularly, I would like to express my gratitude to Associate Professor Noor Lide Abu Kassim, my supervisor, whose expertise, understanding, and patience greatly contribute to my graduate experience. I appreciate her vast knowledge and skill in many areas, her professional guidance, and her assistance in statistics and editing. Specific thanks to Dr. Kamal Badrasawi for his assistance in statistics and editing, and helpful feedbacks during the final stages of this dissertation. I also extend my appreciation to all of my professors and teachers throughout my studies at International Islamic University Malaysia.

In addition, I would like to thank all candidates from two types of Gansu Islamic Schools who responded to this survey, it would not have been possible without their cooperation. Thank you very much for their time and efforts.

Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to all Muslims and non-Muslims for their special and economic support during my Master Degree at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM).

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AM	Amotivation
AT	Attribution Theory
AMTB	Attitude/Motivation Test Battery
ALS	Attitude toward the learning situations
ANX	Language anxiety
EM	Extrinsic Motivation
ER	External Regulation
GPA	Grade Point Average
IUM	International Islamic University Malaysia
IM	Intrinsic Motivation
INO	Instrumental Orientation
INT	Integrativeness
IR	Identified Regulation
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LL	Language learning
LL2	Second language learning
MOT	Motivation
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
RM	Religious Motivation
S.A.W.	Sallahu 'alaihi wa sallam
SPSS	Statistics Program for Social Science
SRS	Simple Random Sample
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Arabic is one of the most important languages in the world. It is one of the working languages of the United Nations. It is spoken by more than 280 million people as the first language and viewed as the official language of 22 countries. It is the language of the Holy Quran and the religious language of more than 1.57 billion Muslims all over the world.

In China, Arabic is one of the earliest foreign languages learned by people. During the Han Dynasty (206B.C.-220A.D.), Arabic language was spoken and learned by few Chinese people when the relation between China and Arab was established. In the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and the Song Dynasty (960-1279), a lot of Arabs came to China to trade to enhance the bilateral relation between the two countries. Many of these Arabs are called “*fanfang*” (foreigners sector) by the local people. They settled in coastal cities of China and built mosques. Islam at this time was formally brought to China (Li & Feng, 1998).

During the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), Arabs continued to maintain a bilateral relationship with tribes of Mongolia¹. Arabic language was widely learned and studied. With the spread of Arab-Islamic culture in different regions of China, Muslim population rapidly increased. From the late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) to the early Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), Islam reached the maturity stage that brought a large

¹ Mongolia: A landlocked country from East to Central Asia (Arabic nations). It is bordered from the north of Russia to the south, east, and west of the People’s Republic of China. Yuan Dynasty could be defined as ‘Mongolia’, and was founded by Kublai Khan, a Mongolian.

number of Muslim Scholars, who greatly contributed to the development of Chinese Islamic education. Arabic language emerged as a significant foreign language. This foreign language was studied until today (Li & Feng, 1998).

According to historical documents, the development of Arabic language is closely linked to Chinese Muslims. A typical example of Arabic replacing Chinese as official language is the rebel kingdom during the Panthay Rebellion². Many Yunnan Chinese in this period learned Arabic language to enhance the relation with Arab nations. Although Arabic language was primarily learned by Chinese people because of the trade demand between the two countries, many Chinese learned Arabic as a religious language when mosques were built in the coastal cities. During Arabic language learning, religious books (e.g., Quran, religious principles and laws, the prophets' story, and Islam history) were used as textbooks. Some of them therefore became Muslims as a result of this long-period of learning of religious knowledge at the mosques.

Arabs residing in China also had closer interactions with the local people who were learning at the mosques. Some of the Arab men married local ladies; Chinese Muslims were allowed to marry with Arab ladies. This intermarriage between Chinese and Arabs led to the increase of the Chinese Muslim population. Until this period, Arabic language is a language that only belongs to Chinese Muslims.

It is not until the 20th century that Non-Muslim Chinese began to learn Arabic when public universities (colleges) offered Arabic language as a specialization. For

² The Panthay Rebellion (1856 – 1873): It was led by Du Wenxi, an ethnic 'Hui' born in Yongchang. The discrimination with which the 'Hui' people were treated in the Qing Dynasty was the cause of their rebellion. The Panthay Revolt by Yunnan Muslims was set off by racial antagonism and class warfare, rather than Islam and religion. A million people in the Panthay Rebellion were killed because of the failed rebellion in 1873.

Chinese Muslims, learning Arabic language is a sign of 'Hui' identity and highest personal honor. Today, more and more Muslims recognize that learning Arabic language is a duty for them. In different regions of China, 35 Islamic Schools have been established to provide good Islamic education to Chinese Muslims. The curriculum in these schools covers religious knowledge (e.g., Quran, Hadith, and Islamic history), Arabic language, Arabic grammar, English language, Chinese language, and other academic subjects. Arabic language is not only viewed as a medium of instruction for most of these subjects but it is also the most important subject taught in these Islamic Schools. Moreover, various academic activities, such as Arabic speech competition and Quran recitation are held regularly to improve the quality of Arabic language amongst the students.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

Although the Arabic language has been learned informally and formally by the Chinese people from the Tang Dynasty till today, its comparative importance to other foreign or second languages is almost negligible. For example, according to the Chinese Educational Policy, English language as a compulsory subject is offered similar to the Chinese language and Mathematics in 418, 300 primary and secondary schools (Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, 2008). Conversely, Arabic is not given due importance in these schools, despite the fact that many Muslim children go to some of these schools. Hence, there are no students learning Arabic at these schools.

With reference to Chinese universities and colleges, Arabic language as a specialization cannot ensure that Muslim students will learn Arabic formally. In China,

foreign or second languages (such as English, French, Spanish, and Arabic) are offered by 1925 universities (colleges), including approximately 100 foreign universities and colleges (e.g., Beijing Foreign University and Shanghai Foreign University). In the 20th century, the Muslim population is approximately 20 million, but Arabic as a Second Language is only offered by 11 public universities (colleges) (Appendix A) and 35 Islamic Schools (Appendix B). Roughly, 25,000 Muslim students are studying Arabic language as a specialization in public universities and colleges, Islamic universities and colleges, and Islamic Schools either in China or outside China. This shows that only a small number of students are learning Arabic language in China. It also shows many Chinese Muslim students are still learning Arabic language informally.

The third is the lack of empirical research on the role of motivation, particularly religious motivation, on Arabic language learning. Previous studies have reported the importance of motivation on language (L1 and L2) learning achievement but not many has looked at Arabic language learning. Arabic language has been taught in China for around 30 years but very few studies have involved Arabic learning. Furthermore, no empirical study has reported how motivation is related to Arabic language learning. Motivation is a driving force that encourages individuals to achieve their goals (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Dornyei, 1994, 1998; Gardner, 1985, 2001; Noels et al., 2001; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Even the smartest student has difficulty to achieve good results if he or she lacks motivation to learn. With the right motivation, it is possible for a moderate or poor student to achieve or exceed the learning target. Given these reasons, it is very important to explore the relationship between motivation and Arabic language learning achievement.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of this study was to explore factors that influence Arabic learning achievement and examine the relative contribution of the different aspects of motivation (Intrinsic Motivation [IM], Extrinsic Motivation [EM], Amotivation [AM], and Religious Motivation [RM]) on Arabic learning achievement. The secondary purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between different aspects of motivation (IM, EM, AM, and RM) and compare the level of motivation (IM, EM, AM, and RM) between students from two types of Gansu Islamic Schools in China.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Consistent with the purpose of this study, the objectives were to:

1. identify factors that contribute to Arabic learning achievement;
2. examine the relationship between different aspects of motivation (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, amotivation, and religious motivation) and Arabic learning achievement;
3. explore the relative contributions of the different aspects of motivation (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, amotivation, and religious motivation) on Arabic learning achievement; and
4. compare the level of motivation (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, amotivation, and religious motivation) between students from the two types of Gansu Islamic Schools in China.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions have been formulated for the purpose of this study:

1. What factors are perceived to contribute to Arabic learning achievement in the Gansu Arabic Schools and Gansu Islamic College in China?
2. What are the relationships between the different aspects of motivation (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, amotivation, and religious motivation)?
3. What is the relative contribution of different aspects of motivation (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, amotivation, and religious motivation) on Arabic learning achievement?
4. Are there significant differences in the level of motivation (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, amotivation, and religious motivation) between students from the Gansu Arabic Schools and the Gansu Islamic College in China?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study intended to make contributions in two aspects: theoretical and practical.

Theoretical Contribution

This study hopes to further extend findings on the role of religious motivation on Arabic language learning. Although Bakar et al. (2010) in their study extended religious motivation to SDT framework; its contribution was limited to Malaysian students' Arabic language learning achievement. This study further explored the role of religious motivation on Arabic language learning achievement of Muslim students in China, in the effort to provide further empirical evidence on the role of religious

motivation on Arabic language learning. This study also modeled the interrelationships between other aspects of motivation (IM, EM, and AM) and religious motivation to further understand the role of religious motivation.

Practical Contribution

This study provided an empirical means of finding the possible reasons for students' learning Arabic language and factors that contribute towards their Arabic language learning achievement. Second, it provided evidences on the relationship between different aspects of motivation and student's Arabic language learning achievement. These findings would assist teachers to improve their teaching quality and motivate students to learn Arabic language more effectively so as to improve their Arabic language learning outcomes.

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study has delimitations in the following aspects. There are several theories of motivation that focus on language learning, such as Social-educational Model, Self-Determination Theory, Attribution Theory and Goal Theories.

The Social-Educational Model is proposed by Gardner (1985) that "achievement in a second language is largely a function of two individual difference variables, language aptitude and motivation" (Gardner, 2009, p.5) and investigated a number of different phenomena (such as classroom environment) associated with learning a second language (Gardner, 2006; Gardner, 1985; Lalonde & Gardner, 1985; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-determination Theory details types of motivation (Intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and amotivation) in second language learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Noels, 2001; Noels et al., 2000;

Vallerand, 1997). According to Attribution Theory (Heider, 1958; Weiner, 1986), language learning success attributed to personal ability or other internal factors (e.g., sufficient effort) and failure to temporary shortcomings that can be overcome (e.g., lack of effort or time to spend) (Dornyei, 2003; Williams & Burden, 1999; Ushioda, 1996, 1998). Likewise, this theory also emphasizes the factors of luck and task difficulty is related to the level of second language learning. With a view to Goal Theories, the Goal Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) emphasizes learners must have goals to motivate them to acquire a new language, and the goals have to be set and pursued by choice (Dornyei, 1994, 1998; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Unlike the Goal Setting Theory, the Goal Orientation Theory was “developed in a classroom context in order to explain children’s learning and performance” (Dornyei, 2001, p.27), so this theory has been used to explicate the performance and mastery (learning) goals on motivation in second language (Ames, 1992; Ames & Archer, 1988; Dornyei, 2001). However, this study only focuses on the Self-Determination Theory to explain the relationship between different aspects of motivation and Arabic (L2) language learning achievement.

Two types of Islamic Schools have been established in eleven regions of China. This study selects three Islamic Schools from the Gansu province as the sample for this study. The Gansu Province lies in the northwest of China; thus the findings of this study are more reflective of the Muslim students in this region.

This study randomly selected male high-school graduates aged between 20 to 22 years old from Arabic Classes. Thus the study findings can only accurately represent the target population on the relationship between motivation and Arabic language learning achievement.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) advocates two basic aspects of motivation: Intrinsic Motivation (IM) and Extrinsic Motivation (EM). Intrinsic motivation is based on the innate needs for satisfaction and competence; for example, a student who tries to learn a foreign language for pleasure or enjoyment. Personal satisfaction and enjoyment could be his motivation to acquire a new language. Vallerand, Blais, Briere and Pelletier (1989) proposed that IM is composed of three taxonomies, namely IM-knowledge, IM-accomplishment and IM-stimulation.

Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is related to external factors that motivate individuals to achieve a goal (Bakar et al., 2010; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Gardner, 1985, 2001; Noels et al., 2001). For example, a student tries to learn a foreign language for a good job. This type of motivation is positively related to language learning. It is also said to compose of three subgroups, External Regulation, Introjected Regulation and Identified Regulation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Noels et al., 2001; Vallerand et al., 1989).

Conversely, an individual with amotivation will lead to passive compliance or low motivation that leads to low learning outcomes (Bakar et al., 2010; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Noels et al., 2001; Vallerand et al., 1989). For example, a student who loses the interest to learn English tends to get low GPA. Many language researchers have explored the relationship between motivation and language learning based on the following framework of SDT (Bakar et al., 1985; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000, 2008; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Noels et al., 2000; Vallerand et al., 1989). It is structured based on the taxonomy of human motivation developed by Deci and Ryan (2000) (Figure 1.1).

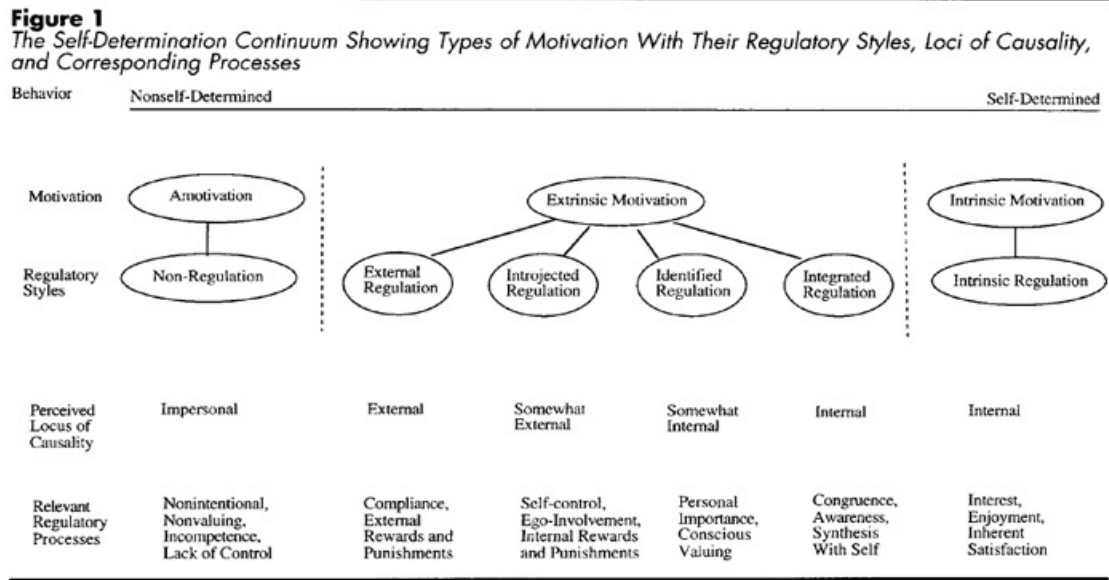


Figure 1.1: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations

Source: Ryan & Deci (2000, p. 61): Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions

Prior researchers applied Deci and Ryan's SDT theory to explain the different aspects of motivation in L2 learning achievement (Bakar et al., 2010; Clement, Dornyei, & Noels, 1994; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2008; Dornyei, 1990; Ellis, 1994; Noels et al., 2000; Oxford, 1996).

Reasons for learning a second language can be classified according to the degree to which learners freely choose to learn another language, and the degree to which they are self-determined (Bakar et. al, 2010; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Noels, 2001a; Noels et al., 2000). Based on Figure 1.1, Noels et al. (2001) has reported seven types of motivation on English-psychology students from a French-English bilingual university. Table 1.1 shows the correlation between motivation subscales and L2 motivation.