



Chapter One

Introduction

Motivation has long been regarded as crucially important in the process of successful language acquisition (Saville-Troike, 2006; Skehan, 1989), and has therefore attracted considerable research interest (Irie, 2003). The relationship between L2 motivation, effort, and L2 proficiency has been a hot issue in the field of second language acquisition research. Researchers at home and abroad have conducted numerous studies in this area. They have dealt with the relationship between L2 motivation, effort, and L2 proficiency from different aspects.

Some investigated the effects of motivation on L2 proficiency (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Gardner, 2005; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991; Gardner, Lalonde, & Moorcroft, 1985; Glikzman, Gardner, & Smythe, 1982; Ma, 2005; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995), others investigated the effects of motivation on effort (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005a, 2005b; Csizér & Kormos, 2008; Csizér & Kormos, 2009a, 2009b; Csizér & Luàcs, 2010; Gao *et al.*, 2003a; Gao, Zhao, Cheng, & Zhou, 2011; Kormos, Kiddle, & Csizér, 2011; Liu, Yao, & Hu, 2012; Papi, 2010; Qin & Wen, 2002; Ryan, 2009; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009). However, the major focus of these studies is on the relationship between L2 motivation in general and L2 proficiency in general. Only a limited amount of research investigated the relationship between motivation for specific skills



of L2 proficiency and the skills (e.g. Mori, 2002; Shi, 2011; Yang & Ding, 2004; Zou & Zhao, 2009). Few studies investigated L2 speaking motivation, and even fewer studies investigated the relationship between L2 speaking motivation, effort, and L2 speaking proficiency. One of the reasons is that there has been a lack of L2 motivation questionnaires for the specific skills of L2 proficiency with acceptable validity and reliability.

The mainstream theories of motivation used in second language acquisition were the socio-educational model proposed by Gardner and a series of L2 motivation theories developed by Dörnyei (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011, p.39). Their theories of motivation have been general in nature. However, if we want to study the relationship between motivation for a specific skill of L2 proficiency and the skill, we need to decide on a theoretical framework of motivation to account for the underlying motive of the specific skills of L2 proficiency.

This research constructs a questionnaire for L2 speaking motivational self system by taking Dörnyei's L2 motivational self system as the theoretical framework. Based on the theoretical framework and the questionnaire for L2 speaking motivational self system, an empirical study is carried out to examine how L2 speaking motivational variables and L2 speaking effort affect L2 speaking proficiency. The specific research questions are:

- 1) How does L2 speaking effort affect L2 speaking proficiency?
- 2) How do L2 speaking motivational variables affect L2 speaking proficiency through L2 speaking effort?

1.1 Need for the Present Study

The present research is needed theoretically, methodologically, and pedagogically.

1) Theoretical Need

It is theoretically needed to conduct a study to model the relationship between L2 speaking motivation, effort, and L2 speaking proficiency and to clarify the roles of actual effort and intended effort in the relationship between motivation and L2 speaking proficiency in such a model.

(1) Modelling the Relationship between L2 Speaking Motivation, Effort, and L2 Speaking Proficiency

The relationship between L2 speaking motivation, effort, and L2 speaking proficiency is unclear. It is needed to examine the relationship between them. Previous studies focused their attention on the relationship either between motivation and L2 proficiency or between motivation and effort. For example, research done by Gardner and his associates has revealed ample evidence that motivational variables provide a parsimonious interpretation of learners' achievements in second language acquisition. In addition, studies of Dörnyei and his associates indicated that L2 motivational self system could account for learners' effort. Few studies explored the relationship between L2 speaking motivation, effort and L2 speaking proficiency, and no study examined the relationship between L2 speaking motivational self system and L2 speaking proficiency. In addition, further studies are needed to explore the mediating roles of intended effort and actual effort in learners' achievements, since previous studies just focused on intended effort. Therefore, empirical studies are needed to explore the relationship among L2 speaking motivation, effort, and L2 speaking proficiency in order to clarify the effects of L2 speaking motivation and effort on L2 speaking proficiency, the relationship between these motivational variables, and the effects of both intended and actual effort on L2 speaking proficiency. In addition, Effort has generally been regarded as a series of motivated behaviours. However, its importance has not aroused wide concern among researchers. It was mostly incorporated in the study of L2 motivation in previous research. Gardner (1985) included effort in his socio-educational model of L2 motivation, which was labelled as motivational intensity (p.10). Gardner and his associates believed that motivational intensity (effort) directly affected L2 achievements (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Dörnyei (2011: 200) regarded effort as one of the criterion measures that was affected by motivation.

(2) Clarifying the Roles of Actual Effort and Intended Effort in the Relationship between Motivation and L2 Speaking Proficiency

The role of effort in the relationship between motivation and L2



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proficiency needs to be clarified. Although Gardner and his associates held the direct relationship between motivation and L2 proficiency, the effects of different motivational variables on effort (motivational intensity) was not elaborated. Dörnyei and his associates was opposed to the direct relationship between motivation and L2 proficiency, and included effort as a criterion measure to link between motivation and L2 proficiency, they just studied the effects of motivation on effort, without mentioning the effects of effort on L2 proficiency. Furthermore, intended learning effort was always included in previous studies of the relationship between motivation and L2 proficiency, with little attention being paid to actual learning effort. For example, Dörnyei and his associates all included intended effort as a criterion measure in their L2 motivation studies. Results in these studies indicated that motivational variables within the L2 motivational self system could account for learners' intended effort (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005a, 2005b; Csizér & Kormos, 2008; Csizér & Kormos, 2009a, 2009b; Csizér & Luàcs, 2010; Kormos *et al.*, 2011; Taguchi *et al.*, 2009). However, the effects of intended effort on L2 proficiency were not included in these studies. Furthermore, the effects of motivational variables on actual effort and the effects of actual effort on L2 proficiency were unclear.

2) Methodological Need

It is methodologically needed to design a multi-dimensional study and to construct an L2 speaking motivation questionnaire in order to examine the relationship between L2 speaking motivation, effort, and L2 speaking proficiency.

(1) Designing a Multi-dimensional Study

In order to clarify the relationship between L2 speaking motivation, effort, and L2 speaking proficiency, a multi-dimensionally designed study is needed. Methodologies in previous motivation research mainly emphasized correlation analysis, as was indicated in Masgoret and Gardner's (2003) meta-analysis. Some studies used SEM approach to explore the relationships between motivation and effort, but no research was conducted concerning the relationship between motivation and L2 speaking proficiency by means of