CHAPTER TWO

THE PRESENT STUDY

Section A

Related Literature: An Overview

2.0 Introduction

The concept of attitude is being widely used these days, whether on the television—such as when a character is portrayed as having 'good' or 'bad' attitude—or in everyday speech. For example, a recent American newspaper reported how a shop manager was dismissed from her job after a celebrity customer 'objected to her attitude'. Even in sports, especially in cricket or football, coaches always stress a 'positive mental attitude'.

2.1 What is attitude?

There is no clear cut definition of attitude. It has been a core issue of social psychology since 1935, when Gordon Allport claimed it as the 'most distinctive and indispensable concept of contemporary social psychology' (source: internet). Social psychologists termed it as a predisposition to clarify objects and events, and to react to them with some degree of evaluative consistency. While attitudes logically are hypothetical constructs (i.e. they are inferred but not objectively observable) they are manifested in conscious experience, verbal reports, gross behaviour and psychological symptoms.

The concept of attitude arises from attempts to account for observed regularities in the behaviour of individual persons. One tends to group other around him into common classes; he may assign people of a given skin colour to a single class and behave similarly toward all of them. In such a case he is said to hold an attitude specific to that ethnic or racial group.

The quality of one's attitude is judged from the observable, evaluative responses one tends to make. One might react to everyone of the same ethnic
background with expressions of dislike, with derogatory comments about their honesty or intelligence, or one may advocate repressive, exclusionary public policies against them. On the evidence of such negative responses, one is said to have an unfavourable attitude toward the ethnic group. Someone who uniformly praises non-objective paintings, who frequently attends galleries that exhibits them and hangs their reproductions on his walls etc. is judged to hold a favourable attitude toward non-objective art.

Attitudes held by public are not directly observable. They must be inferred from behaviour. While one must consult his inner experiences as evidences of his own attitudes, only his public behaviour can receive objective study. Thus investigators heavily depend on behavioural indices of attitudes e.g., on what people say, on how they respond to questionnaires, or on such psychological signs as changes in heart rate.

Some critics have expressed their reservations regarding the validity of the concept. According to them, the concept lacks empirical reference, and hence cannot be used effectively as a unit of analysis, either in personality organisation or in the study of social action. Also it is difficult to ascertain what data to include as part of an attitude and what data to exclude.

Such views are, however, in the minority and social scientists have predicted that despite its ambiguity, the concept of attitude will remain with us for many years to come.

2.2 Problems unique to measuring attitudes

The task of measuring attitudes is by no means simple. Furthermore, attempting to demonstrate attitude change, as some evaluations require, is probably the most difficult of the evaluation tasks.

The prime reason lies with the concept of attitude itself. Like many abstract concepts, attitude is a creation – a construct. As such, it is a tool that serves the human need to see order and consistency in what people say, think and do, so that given certain behaviours, predictions can be made about future behaviours. An attitude is not something we can examine and measure in the same way we can
examine the cells of a person's skin or measure the rate of his heartbeat. We can only infer that a person has attitudes by his words and actions.

We can take a hypothetical example. Taimur says he hates school. To him it is a waste of time. He seldom completes any homework or participates willingly in class activities. He has frequent problems with his teachers. We infer a relationship among all these behaviours, and we describe that relationship by saying that Taimur has a poor attitude toward school. We then make various predictions from these behaviours, among them, that Taimur will cease to go to school just as soon as he is free to make that decision.

Unfortunately for our measurement purposes, patterns of behaviour are not always as consistent as the pattern depicted for Taimur. We know that behaviour is the result of many complex factors — feelings engendered by previous experiences, assessments of the expectations of others, anticipation of the consequences of a particular act.

Mobin, like Taimur, says he does not care much for school, and it is boring. He is delighted to stay at home on any likely pretext. He, however completes all his homework, has good relationship with his teachers, and is progressing academically. How do we describe his attitude toward school? Do we go by what he says? Do we go by what he does at home? At school?

If we go by what he says and if our measure is a questionnaire asking, 'Do you like school?', Mobin might score low. If it is his teacher's assessment of Mobin's classroom behaviour, he will score high. How can we decide about his true attitude, and on what basis can we say that one of these measures is more valid than the other?

Should we assume that we can accept a person's statements about his own attitude as the best indicator of the attitude? In some circumstances, yes, particularly when we can see no reason for him to hide anything. If we want to know which set of mathematical activities the students enjoyed and which ones they disliked, a few straightforward questions should provide us with accurate information. Many of the things we want to know, however, are not easy to find out.
Apart from this, we need to consider also that attitudes change according to contexts. On Monday, Hasangana says she loves school. Asked again on Wednesday, she says she does not like it much. Mobin’s case again crops up the debate – if we gauge his attitude toward school by both his own statements and the teacher’s report, we have inconsistent information.

When we attempt to measure a complex attitude, as for example, attitude toward school, we find that it has many ‘facets’ – feelings and beliefs about one’s teachers, teachers in general, classmates, school subjects, activities. We find it has many ‘manifestations’ – school work, attention in class, interaction with others, verbal responses.

Yet, surely it is complex attitudes like these that we are most interested in influencing and, for evaluation purposes, measuring. We have to proceed with the following precautions firmly in mind:

(a) When we measure attitudes, we must rely on inference, since it is impossible to measure attitudes directly.

(b) Behaviours, beliefs and feelings will not always match, even when we correctly assume that they reflect a single attitudes; so to focus on only one manifestation of an attitude may tend to distort our picture of the situation and mislead us.

(c) We have no guarantee that the attitude we want to assess will ‘stand still’ long enough for a one-time measurement to be reliable. A volatile or fluctuating attitude cannot be revealed by information gathered on one occasion.

(d) When we study certain attitudes. We have to do so without universal agreement on their nature.

(e) Since attitude measurement for programme evaluation generally calls for assessment of attitudes of a ‘group’ of people, the measures applied will not require the precision of measurement that is essential for making predictions about individuals.
2.3 Attitudes and foreign language learning

Attitudes play a major role not only in the learning of a foreign language, but also in determining what one is to achieve from the knowledge of that tongue.

At a preliminary stage, a person’s positive attitude toward any particular language may generate positive notions toward the people, culture and society related to that language. If the positive notions continue within him for long, it can foster his motivation to acquire several aspects of that target language and culture even if he finds that there is not so much ‘professional value’ of his endeavour. And if there is any, he will obviously perceive the ‘communicative value’ of that SL in order to fulfil his social and professional aspirations, and will be highly, motivated to achieve the required proficiency in it. It happened in case of the Persian language during the Mughal rule in India, followed by English in the British era.

In case of English this issue has become very pertinent due to the single fact: that it is the prime LWC around the globe – being used as an SL in most countries outside the ‘inner circle’ (Kachru, 1985). There are more people who speak English as a foreign language than there are MT speakers. And additionally the fact is, there are more beginning students in English than there are L2 speakers (Modiano, 1996:22).

Nevertheless, when someone possess favourable attitudes toward the people of the target language (TL), more precisely toward the TL community, he will desire to learn the language efficiently as compared to normal settings. This concept is widely known as ‘Acculturation Model’ (Shumann, 1978). According to Shumann, acculturation is the major causal variable in second language acquisition, and the degree to which learns acculturate to the TL group will control the degree to which they acquire the TL (Khanna, 1985: 63). He highlighted two forms of acculturation. In the first type the learner is socially integrated with the TL group, and in the second type, the TL group acts as the reference point. In the former type, the learner’s original identity is never at stake. His social integration leads to sufficient contact, and his psychological openness converts the input he receives into intake.

Gardner and Lambert have stressed the importance of ‘anti-authoritarian’ and ‘non-ethnocentric’ attitudes in acquiring mastery in any FL. They maintained that
learners who have strong ethnocentric or authoritarian attitude or have learned to be prejudiced toward foreign peoples are likely to approach the language learning task with or integrative outlook (1972:16).

Gardner and Lambert thus believe that a learner’s motivation to learn on FL will depend on his attitudes and willingness to identify with the linguistic and non-linguistic features that characterize the speakers of the TL. In this connection they coined the ideas of ‘integrative motivation’ to refer to language learning for personal growth and cultural enrichment, and ‘instrumental motivation’ for language learning for more immediate and practical goals. Research has shown that these types of motivation are related to success in SL learning (Lightbown and Spada, 2000).

R.K. Agnihotri and A.L Khanna (1998) have highlighted Gardner and Lambert’s less narrated ‘resentment motivation’ and ‘manipulative motivation’ which concern a further realistic approach in apprehending public attitudes towards the English issue. That the system of education compels even the unwilling learner go for learning English can be characterised through the ‘resentment’ motivation. And the power-status issues relate to the acquisition of an SL (which helps the learner manipulate others for personal gains) can be understood by the study of manipulative motivation.

Several researchers on these social psychological models of SL learning were done apart from Gardner and Lambert (1972), in Canada, American and Philippines over a period of twelve years (like, Gardner and Lambert 1959; Anisfeld and Lambert 1961; Lambert, Gardner, Barik and Tunstall 1962, Gardner 1968) which were all linked as a series. These researches depict that apart from Philippines where English was learnt for instrumental purposes, integrative motivation was claimed to be an important variable influencing SL proficiency. However, in each context a distinctive attitudinal basis for motivational orientation was found. As for example, in one place, it was on ‘awareness of the usefulness of the target language’, in other places, it was either ‘parental encouragement’ or ‘identification with the teachers’ or ‘sensitivity to other people’s feelings’ and so on.

Other researches have shown that measures of proficiency in SL were highly related to measures of attitude and motivation. But this was not accepted by linguists like Burstall (1975). Working with the teaching of French in primary schools, he
found that despite that close link between pupils' attitude and achievement, motivational characteristics of individual pupil appeared to be neither exclusively integrative nor instrumental (Khanna, 1984:249).

Lyczak, Fu and Ho (1976) did not get any significant correlation between achievement and attitudinal variables. Wong (1982) too found that motivational orientation of English-learning Chinese Students had no correlation with their achievement (ibid). Khanna's (1983) doctoral research on learner variables in learning ESL highlighted that achievement in English was influenced more by schooling claimed control of English, exposure to English, use of English among friends, family etc., rather than attitudes and motivation (ibid). Attitudes had significant correlation only with variables of exposure and language use, thereby suggesting that attitudinal variables have only indirect bearing on achievement in English in India (ibid).

However, SL learning is an extremely complex process which comprises numerous issues involving the learners and their environment. No single learner variable can solely determine that rate and success of learning. Gardner and Lambert have rightly emphasized the significance of studying each language learning setting in its own right, and thereby suggested that the configuration of variables obtained training in one setting will not be necessarily valid in another setting. As for example, the South Asian learners learn English for historical, political social and cultural reasons which are radically different from those of South-East Asian or African learners. Khanna and Agnihotri (1982, 1984) and Khanna (1983) thus realized that the Gardner and Lambert distinction of motivational orientation would not capture the motivational complexity in the Indian situation (Khanna, 1985:64). Their studies some or less proved that the Indian learners' reasons for learning English were basically instrumental in character. The absence of integrative motivation according to them was:

...because there is no well-defined socio-cultural group with which students may wish to identify themselves and whose behavioural patterns may be called western.

(quoted in Khanna, 1985:64)
Hence Khanna and Agnihotri modified Gardner and Lambert’s motivational orientations as per Indian context. They categorized learners’ motivational reasons into ‘complementary motivation’ and ‘supplementary motivation’.

The former refers to the motivation to learn English in order to get better jobs or receive higher education; while the latter refers to the motivation to learn English for additive/ornamental purposes, i.e. to read English literature, to see English movies or just to feel superior etc. (ibid).

Therefore, it is clear that attitudes towards a foreign language are, by and large, manipulated by the learners’ real-life needs/demands which are in turn controlled and guided by their respective socio-cultural settings.

2.4 Public attitudes in Bangladesh toward English

One fact needs to be taken into account in the beginning. So far, there has been not a single study by anyone in Bangladesh in regard to public attitudes concerning English – be it teaching and learning or language policy or otherwise. Whatever limited researches have been done are mostly related to classroom teaching and learning, students’ acquisition of the four skills, teaching methodologies and so on. But there is no sociolinguistic study of EFL available concerning public attitudes.

This researcher, thus had no opportunity to go through, review and evaluate any Bangladeshi literature in this domain.

In Bangladesh, the influence of English is all pervasive. It has been estimated that 1-3% of the population is bilingual in English. In raw figures it translates into 2-3 million people. English is used by this relatively small but extremely influential portion of the country’s population in the domains of government, law, military, commerce and media. But as said earlier, there has been no study to measure the variables which influenced the attitudes of this population toward English. Also one cannot find what the vast section of underprivileged population thinks about learning, and use of, English. One cannot find the true picture of public attitudes toward the existing bilingual education too. The absence of any type of empirical
research has been a major difficulty for this present study to proceed from an evidential point.

However, the present study intended to move forward in the light of the studies done in the wider context of South Asia as well as other parts. But then, the problem has been that all those previous studies have not particularly centred round the issue of attitudes, and more specifically, public attitudes. They have been mostly dealt with concerning learner attitudes – along with a complex variety of other variables which lead to effective learning process.

This study on the other hand, is not merely aimed at learners, but at people who are the ‘guardians of learners’. And more importantly, the respondents’ personal proficiency-level was not considered important. The study is simply aimed at measuring the attitudes of the general public concerning various facets that are related to the English issue in Bangladesh, and thus come up with a total picture which could become a platform for the authorities to construct (or reconstruct) the space called English in the Bangladeshi setting.

In case of any previous policy formulations never have public attitudes been taken into consideration. Therefore the study may be considered as a starting point of a long journey ahead.
Section B

Methodological Preliminaries

2.5 Introduction

In the previous chapter, a review of related literature dealing with attitudinal issues and the various researches on those were discussed. In the following pages, the methods and procedures used in this study will be described and discussed.

2.6 Sample

Given the limitations of time and resources, it was difficult for the study to cover all the urban areas of Bangladesh. It was therefore necessary to concentrate on a sample taken from one urban area of the country, i.e., Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh.

The reasons for selecting Dhaka as the area for the survey were twofold. First, being the capital city, it is the focal point of all types of educational, economic, social and political operations that give it an added advantage over the other metropolitan cities. Second, because of its prominent nature, the nature of facilities available here can hardly be matched by the other cities.

A stratified random sample of six hundred and thirty four (634) people was chosen among whom four hundred and twenty six (426) were employed / working persons, and two hundred and eight (208) were students below the higher secondary level.
The selection of the sample was done in the following manner.

Four (4) government establishments, four (4) business establishments, four (4) multinational establishments, six (6) institutions of education (2 schools, 2 colleges and 2 universities) were selected from each group of establishments through stratified random sampling procedure.

The reason for selecting the above-mentioned five categories of establishments is: the educated people of Dhaka city, largely, are occupationally engaged in all these five categories of establishments according to various capacities and degrees of works.

The population of 426 educated people did not constitute any homogenous group. Rather it comprised general jobholders (both government and private), businessmen (both small and large-scale), teachers and professionals (engineers, lawyers, doctors, journalists and so on). Therefore, hopefully the sample is highly representative and reliable as far as the objectives of the study are concerned.

In case of the student sample, two secondary and two higher secondary educational institutions were chosen from each group, also through stratified sampling. The population of 208 students was randomly chosen from the already selected institutions. Their educational level ranged from class 9 to class 12.

There is a basic reason for selecting class 9 as the lowest level. After the primary stage (class 1 to class 5), the lower secondary stage starts from class 6. The crucial stage of English teaching and learning actually starts from this class, and when the students reach class 9, they are expected to have already attained the required basic competence and maturity. Also class 9 is considered as the 'starting
point' of preparation for SSC examination which takes place after the completion of class 10 (all text books in all the subjects are hence written 'for class 9 and 10'). Therefore, the responses of the students starting from class 9 would, definitely, reflect more maturity than those of the lower classes.

2.7 Questionnaire

A questionnaire with two separate sections was administered to all the randomly selected people. The first section was for the employed / working people. It comprised twenty-five (25) statements (positive and negative) concerning the following aspects:

a) education system of Bangladesh,

b) existing bilingual education,

c) mother tongue Bangla,

d) the role of English in general,

e) English and power-status,

f) English and Bangladeshis,

g) parental encouragement regarding English learning and

h) English-related people and institutions of the society.

The second section was for the students of secondary and higher secondary levels. It contained fifteen (15) statements (positive and negative) concerning

a) different types of motivational orientations regarding English learning,

b) their perceptions of English teachers,

c) anxieties in an outside the classrooms and

d) their perspective of parental encouragement.
The participants, according to their respective sections, had to respond by marking √ (tick) in any one of the five alternatives — i.e. 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' — given under each statement, which would indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with these statements.

Apart from these statements, the questionnaire contained questions to elicit the following information:

a) personal background of the respondents: age, sex, occupational and financial status, educational qualifications;

b) the extent of their use of English in different domains of activities: within and outside their families.

c) the extent of their association with English via media and books;

Besides all these, observations and opinions of the respondents concerning related issues appearing in the questionnaire were taken into account—leading to a small-scale qualitative survey.

### 2.8 Personal variables

#### 2.8.1 Age

In a study of this nature, age is a vital factor. Attitudes differ according to age. For the findings of the surveys to be plausible, respondents must be of different age groups within similar context as much as possible.

Though there is no hard and fast rule for this, the present study did not show any high fluctuations in the age groups. The reason was that the study was
conducted among those who had been already employed, and also who had been guardians/parents of students. Hence, most of them stood on a similar level of matured perceptions.

Table 1
Distribution of the adult sample by AGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>above 35 years</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>below 35 years</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for the students, their age group did not have much difference either—as they belonged to class 9 to class 12. This meant they ranged from 13 to 18 years (in terms of the Bangladesh context).

2.8.2 Sex

Though sex is an important variable in a study, in this case it turned out to be the least important due to the fact that since the survey was conducted among the employed persons, and that too at the places of their work. Hence, the ratio of men and women was excessively wide. Most of the respondents were men as compared to their women counterpart.

Table 2
Distribution of the adult sample by SEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>91.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.8.3 Educational Qualification

This variable was automatically minimized due to the fact that 93.6% of the respondents were above the Bachelor degree level, with 74.6% being Master
degree holders. The extent of maturity, which emerges from being a graduate or a post-graduate, was thus evenly distributed.

Table 3
Distribution of the adult sample by EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher secondary</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post graduate</td>
<td>74.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In case of students, this variable would have made a slight difference as the higher secondary students are somewhat more mature than the secondary ones. But is was marginalised due to one factor: their experience within the English classroom, as well as their attachment to English related issues are almost the same regardless of their academic orientations.

2.8.4 Socio-economic background

Since the study focussed mainly on the employed people, their social and economic backgrounds, i.e., their occupational and financial status were the most crucial variables in this study. Attitudes are expected to vary according to the respondents' occupation and economic orientations. A person holding a higher professional status may have significantly different notions regarding the English issue in comparison to one having a lower professional status. Same is the case in relation to economic status.
Table 4
Distribution of the adult sample by OCCUPATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service (well paid)</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service (not so well paid)</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business (large scale)</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business (small scale)</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5
Distribution of the adult sample by INCOME GROUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tk. 2000 — Tk. 4900</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tk. 5000 — Tk. 7900</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tk. 8000 and above</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.9 External factor

There were several problems that came up in the process of data collection, the major one being the scarcity of time at the respondents' disposal. Especially in case of employed/working people, it was experienced that a large portion of them hardly had enough time to spare. Many of them had to be approached several times in order to get them to spare some time for the questionnaire.

In this regard their responses have to be considered in view of the context or situations they were in. Those might be slight differences in a different situation, say, at their homes while in relaxed moods. A good number of high-ranking officials often showed reluctance to respond to some statements, as they feared these might cause problems in their professional lives.
However, the students were a lot more enthusiastic in their participation. Not only did they spare a good amount of time, but also they actively took part in verbal discussions.

### 2.10 Objectives

They study, through its focus on urban educated people’s attitudes towards English and all the related issues, aimed at finding out whether the declining standard in students’ performance in English could be attributed to:

1. the pressure of the existing bilingual system of education from class one onwards,
2. the absence of a language policy regarding English which might have a bearing on students’ learning ability.

The study was thus, intended to examine how the overall conceptual understanding of the relevant issues could help us to define (or redefine) the space called English in Bangladesh.

The study had thus the following as the prime objectives:

1. Determine the reasons why people learn English, and subsequently the extent of their motivation for acquiring proficiency in the language.
2. Identify the appropriate areas of English teaching which would be relevant to the needs of people;
2.11 Subsidiary Objectives

The study intended also to:

1. Find out the extent of their use of English in social and professional lives.

2. Identify the appropriate areas of English teaching which would be relevant to the needs of people.

2.12 Hypotheses

The research was based on the assumptions that:

a) In spite of their highly positive attitude towards English, the urban educated people of Bangladesh do not support the imposition of bilingualism on every citizen and

b) English in Bangladesh is still related to status and power.