CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 PRELIMINARIES
In today's fast paced technology driven world it is necessary to keep track of the latest technologies and make full use of them in our chosen fields. Effective communication in English is absolutely mandatory for success in today's intensely competitive world. An individual's personal, professional and social achievements may be hindered by lack of good communication skills in English which is a global language. Appropriate and effective use of English language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing is crucial for overall development and good communication. The researcher had taken up teaching as a career and had become an English language teacher. This fostered interest in using computers to facilitate language learning as the versatility of the computer to adapt to different requirements was understood. Covering all the four language skills would make the research too extensive and so the researcher has chosen the listening skill in this work.

1.2 IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH
1.2.1 International language: English is an international language. It is an official or semi-official language in over sixty countries of the world (Graddol et al, 1996:30). When one has to move out of one's country, knowledge of English is most essential for purposes of communication. It is a ‘link language’. In our own country which is so diverse and varied and where people speak innumerable languages, if you have to travel from one state to another you cannot learn the language of each state but next to the national language i.e. Hindi, knowledge of English helps for
communication purposes. Thus knowing English makes one more socially and geographically mobile. According to David Crystal (Graddol et al, 1996:29), English becomes a language to fall back on when the mother tongue proves to be inadequate for communication. It is the dominant language for worldwide communication. It is the main language of the world's books, newspapers, and advertising. It is the official international language of airports and air traffic control. It is the chief maritime language. Over two thirds of the world's scientists write in English. Eighty per cent of all information stored in the electronic retrieval systems of the world is stored in English(Graddol et al, 1996:31) According to Brownell (2002, taken from Dunkel & Lim, 2006: viii) technology has increased the number of messages sent and the speed with which they are delivered. In business meetings where English is the language of communication, or in lecture halls where English is the language of instruction, listeners of English must confront a constantly changing and increasingly complex listening environment. In both such surroundings, the ESL/EFL listeners' must- be able to scan the information they receive in English, be able to determine where to focus their attention in the stream of speech and be able to make sense of what they hear. Often, they must make a written or spoken response to demonstrate that they have processed the message correctly.

As Brownell (2002, taken from Dunkel and Lim, 2006: viii) notes, something can go wrong at any stage during this listening process. If something does go wrong, and comprehension fails, it can be expensive for the ESL/EFL learner in terms of money, time, grades, and even personal relationships. On the other hand, if people become stronger and more accurate comprehenders of English, they stand to profit personally, in business meetings or in the lecture halls of college campuses.
1.2.2 I.T. and BUSINESS: English is required for communicating globally and especially now as the world has shrunk into one whole global village due to the advancements in science and technology, knowledge of English is most essential for exchange of information and accessing it via the internet. In an article published on Express India.com (Sivaganga, Aug 9, 2008), ‘Give importance to English, FM tells techies,’ it was reported that Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram asked software graduates to give importance to communication skills in English in addition to a good technical knowledge as premier companies like Infosys looked for students with ability to communicate in English well. Inaugurating a ‘super loan sangamam’ (Loan Mela) of the Shriram Group at Karaikudi near Sivaganga, Mr. Chidambaram said that during placement, held by a leading software company in Sivaganga district, only 19 out of the 57 engineers (who were interviewed) were selected. The reason given by the company was that though the students had very good technical knowledge; they could not communicate well in English. ‘Though it was not necessary to speak like an English professor, students should be able to communicate fluently in English,’ Chidambaram said. So it is but obvious that the English language helps one to climb up the ladder of professional success and reap rich rewards. Otherwise even if you are amply intellectually endowed it could just happen that a lack of knowing the English language would become a hindrance and one would miss out on good job opportunities.

1.3 ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INDIA

India gained independence from the British rule but the system of British education continued in India. English has been granted the status of an
official language here. English is the language of the legal system, of parliament and it is the preferred language in universities and in the all-India competitive exams for senior posts in such fields as civil service and engineering. Some 3,000 English newspapers are published throughout the country. Thus there is great reason to learn to use the language well. But it is thought that those with an educated awareness of English may be as little as 3 per cent of the population (Crystal as in Graddol et al, 1996:30).

In India the direct method of teaching is predominantly seen in schools and colleges for English language learning, where the teacher plays a dominant role. All activities center around the teacher i.e. teacher centered. The teacher is considered to be the fountainhead of all knowledge and the giver of the same. The student is a passive recipient who responds only when asked to. The chalk and talk method is widely accepted.

1.4 PROBLEMS OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN INDIA
As the population is on the upsurge the teacher-student ratio in schools has kept on increasing, going from 1:30 to 1:40 and nowadays a scary 1:60-65. It is difficult to pay individual attention to all the students. In this case the weaker students suffer as they are eclipsed by the more superior and smarter ones and as in the instance of language learning where practice is very essential they are at a definite disadvantage as in a 35-45/55 minute period/lecture the teacher is unable to provide opportunity for everyone to speak.
A teacher’s target is to “prepare” his/her students for the examination and not to make the pupils competent in the use of the language they are learning (Bala Subramanian, 1985: 56). In reality neither the student nor the teacher is anxious to learn or to teach English. So the student is concerned
only about his success in the examination and the teacher’s sole problem is to see that the students pass for diplomas/degrees than for knowledge.

1.5 THE LISTENING SKILL

Listening is the absorption of the meanings of words and sentences by the brain. Listening leads to the understanding of facts and ideas. But listening takes attention, or sticking to the task at hand in spite of distractions. It requires concentration, which is the focusing of your thoughts upon one particular problem. A person who incorporates listening with concentration is actively listening. Active listening is a method of responding to another that encourages communication. Active listening is a very demanding skill that requires practice and perseverance; however, active listening is also very rewarding. If you ask a group of students to give a one word description of listening, some would say hearing; however, hearing is physical. Listening is following and understanding the sound—it is hearing with a purpose. [www.ccsf.edu/~lernasst/lern10/listening.html]. Clearly, each and every individual can benefit from improving the listening skill. By becoming a better listener, you will improve your productivity, as well as your ability to influence, persuade negotiate. What’s more, you’ll avoid conflicts and misunderstandings – all necessary for workplace success.

1.6 PROBLEMS OF TEACHING THE LISTENING SKILL IN INDIA

According to Tickoo (2003:120), in most language teaching programmes listening gets the least attention. In the belief that listening demands little more than keeping our ears open, the syllabus and materials let listening take care of itself. Studies done over many years suggest, however, that
poor listening habits and skills can cause as many failures of communication as ineffective expression of ideas.

English is spoken differently in various parts of the country; throughout the length and breadth of India everyone speaks English with a different accent. Oral competence of teachers teaching English is very poor; reading competence is found to be poor and writing competence seems to be somewhat poor (Franklin, 1997: 246 as in Shermila J, 1999:20). As the student graduates from one class to the next, the language teacher changes, thus each year the student may listen to different accents and different pronunciations of the same words. The students especially in the rural towns and villages of India do not have any good role model to gain competence or imitate the correct nuances of the language. Thus they do not get adequate exposure to the language. In addition, there is no other reliable method through which they can gain competence in the English language, especially the listening skill.

1.7 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Education is a process of evolution, which brings about a change in an individual but to be able to bring about this change the process of education itself has to undergo constant changes. In view of this we need to ponder on the following questions:

i] How viable is the direct method of teaching in these circumstances?

ii] Is the teacher able to pay proper attention to all the students?

iii] Is the teacher in a position to cater to the needs of an individual while he/she has the burden of the entire class?

iv] How effective can the learning be especially when it is a non-native language (L2) and not the native language (L1)?

v] In rural areas where there is a paucity of good English language speakers, on who can the students rely to acquire good language skills?
vi] On what can the teachers rely to supplement their teaching to make it more effective?

vii] How can the boredom of a normal classroom be alleviated to make learning more interesting?

viii] Is there an alternative, an aide that would assist the teacher and make the work easier and more effective?

ix] How can the computer be of help to a language teacher?

x] Why is the computer not an integral part of a language class whereas its use in other fields is indispensable?

1.8 PURPOSE, AIMS AND SCOPE

It is the aim of the researcher to find answers to the above questions as well as many other related questions in this research which would help to throw some light on the effective technologies that can be used for enhancing the acquiring of listening skills as it is the aim of the researcher to show that use of computer technology would be a panacea and help to solve many longstanding as well as diverse problems related to listening skills in language learning. Efficient use of computer technology can supplement the teacher’s teaching and help to cater to individual learner needs. It would also reduce the burden of the teacher while giving the individual an opportunity to learn at his/her own pace. It is the need of the hour as students are already aware of the usefulness of the computer and it is necessary to prepare them for using computers for language learning from a futuristic point of view. So here it becomes necessary to clearly understand technology and its relevant usage in English language teaching and learning. Technology has brought changes in each and every aspect of life then there is no reason why it cannot be useful in the field of education as well.
1.9. COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY

A revolution of a different kind is affecting people from each and every strata of society, this is the information revolution brought about by the advent of computer technology. Each and every individual is experiencing the changes brought about by the emerging trends in technology be it a housewife, a doctor, engineer, or a businessman. Tremendous changes in lifestyles, communication, traveling, business and work have been brought about due to this revolution. From menial daily chores to complicated scientific discoveries, to day-to-day communication, all have witnessed an overall change due to the enormous effect of changing technology. Here the researcher wants to briefly show how each and every aspect of our daily lives is influenced by the changing technologies.

1.9.1 Uses of Computer Technology

1.9.1.1 Communication: with the advent of mobile/cellular phones, keeping in touch with people while on the move has become effortless. There was a time when during traveling there was no way of getting in touch with anyone except when one reached one's destination. Today calls can be made from the cellular phone whilst traveling in the train, plane or on an elevator. Satellite and the internet have reduced calling rates, making STD and ISD calls as cheap as local calls. Gone are the days of the snail mail- the regular postal service, where you had to wait for days on end to receive a letter. Now is the age of the E-mail wherein one just needs an internet connection, one has to type the letter and with the click of a few keys the letter reaches the mail inbox of the recipient.

Mobile phones are evolving day by day and revolutionizing the way we communicate but they are serving a different purpose too. Advanced mobiles today are functioning as mini computers. With a GPRS enabled
handset one can access the internet while on the move. Even while teaching, if one comes across any unfamiliar term, a GPRS enabled handset provides direct access to the internet and with the help of a suitable search engine one can easily find out the meaning of any unknown entity.

1.9.1.2] Information revolution: The internet has initiated an information revolution wherein one can easily and speedily access information on the computer merely with the click of a few keys. Information regarding any topic is available to any individual with the help of search engines like Google, so one need not go to the library every time one wants information on something. Also many other tasks are simplified and so many services are available right from home, e.g. booking railway, air, or film tickets, paying bills, accessing one’s bank account etc. Now one can even shop online and the goods are delivered to one’s home.

1.9.1.3] Word processing: Word-processing software is used to create documents such as letters, memos, reports, mailing labels, and newsletters. This software is used to create attractive and professional-looking documents that are stored electronically, allowing them to be retrieved and revised. The software provides tools to correct spelling and grammatical mistakes, permits copying and moving text without retyping, and provides tools to enhance the format of documents. Prior to the days of the computer one had to make several drafts when one did any kind of writing. Any errors made had to be erased manually or one had to use white ink to cover the error and rewrite on it. But now one can read the written material on the screen and change the errors with the click of a few keys, the auto correct software guides you and shows any grammatical errors in red and also gives the correct spelling for the same. One does not need to sit with a dictionary to see the meaning of any word as the thesaurus installed in the
word processing software shows you the meaning of the word as also its synonyms and antonyms. Therefore there is no need to make several drafts. This saves precious resources like time, energy and paper. Typewritten documents are more neat and legible. Another great boon is that one can store as many copies as one wants in the computer’s different drives or transfer the matter to a pen drive. Pen drive- is a storage device with memory which one can easily take along as it as small as your little finger. Hence one need not carry along sheaves of bulky papers. All the information and data can be carried easily on the pen drive. By sending one copy of the work to an e-mail address one can access the work from any part of the world without having to carry anything manually. This works as a safe deposit vault for the document as the work can be retrieved from any computer with an internet connection just in case there is any technical problem with the personal computer. Devices such as a Bluetooth help in the easy transfer of material from one computer to another.

1.10. COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

The main strength of the computer as a learning medium is its ability to process information very quickly and accurately. The information provided to it can be complex, yet the processing can be completed so quickly as to appear almost instantaneous to the learner. This makes it possible for the computer to accept and act upon a variety of responses from the learner and to provide information in textual, graphical and animated form. The computer can control and coordinate information from other pieces of equipment, like a slide projector or videodisc player and based on the learner's progress it can make sophisticated decisions as to what course to follow next.( Rushby, as in Eraut.M, 1989 :149).
Ellington et al (2003:178) have very effectively summed up 'what computers can do' as follows:

1) store vast amounts of information (data)
2) analyze it at great speed
3) search it at great speed and supply the results of such searches very quickly
4) be made to churn out requested information in a variety of ways
   i) as text and graphics on television monitor screens
   ii) as moving images on television monitor screens
   iii) as sound through loudspeakers or headphones
   iv) as charts, graphs, tables, histograms
   v) as "hard copy" through printers and copiers
   vi) as magnetically stored information on computer discs
   vii) through cables and telephone links to other computers.
5) respond to request from users
6) control other electrical and mechanical equipment
7) can be used to access other information-storage media, such as videodiscs, Compact discs, databanks
8) can be used to provide simulations of situations and conditions which would be far too dangerous to work with directly (for example, processes in the core of nuclear reactors).

The above list presents only a tiny fraction of the things computers can do – but of course they can not do any of these things without being programmed to do so.
Ellington, Percival and Race (2003:9) in their book ‘Handbook of Educational Technology’ have given the definition of educational technology as described by national council for educational Technology for the United Kingdom (NCET) as follows:

‘Educational technology is the development, application and evaluation of systems, techniques and aids to improve the process of human learning.’

A broader definition of technology is used to mean a tool or instrument which helps us to organize and accomplish specific tasks and goals.

Ellington et al (2003:3) say that the principal role of educational technology is to help improve the overall efficiency of the teaching/learning process which can manifest itself in many ways, e.g.

a) Increasing the quality of learning, or degree of mastery;
b) Decreasing the time taken for learners to attain desired goals;
c) Increasing the efficiency of teachers without reducing the quality of learning;
d) Reducing costs, without affecting quality;
e) Increasing the independence of learners, and the flexibility of education and training provision.

1.11 COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

To create an effective learning situation in the classroom, Combs (1976) says that three characteristics are needed:

1. The atmosphere should facilitate the exploration of meaning. Learners must feel safe and accepted. They
need to understand both the risks and rewards of seeking new knowledge and understanding. The classroom must provide for involvement, interaction, and socialization, along with a business-like approach to getting the job done.

2. Learners must be given frequent opportunities to confront new information and experiences in the search for meaning. However, these opportunities need to be provided in ways that allow students to do more than just receive information. Students must be allowed to confront new challenges using their past experience without the dominance of a teacher/giver of information.

3. New meaning should be acquired through a process of personal discovery. The methods used to encourage such personal discovery must be highly individualized and adapted to the learner's own style and pace for learning.

The computer has become an integral part of the modern world though in the area of education its potential is not fully tapped as yet. The computer can play an important role in the teaching–learning process as follows:

1.11.1. **Teacher's tool:** the computer can play an invaluable role as the *teacher's assistant*. It has many multi-faceted functions which if used by the teacher can enhance the teaching and make the teacher a favorite with
the students. The computer can alleviate the boredom of a normal classroom making learning more interesting and fun. Thus learning becomes more effective when the learners "want" to learn rather than "have" to learn. In advanced countries the use of computers in schools is common but this is not seen in schools in India which is due to many reasons like computer illiteracy – teachers do not know how to use the computer. There are also economic constraints as computers are expensive. But when we see the efficacy of using computers in teaching these hurdles can easily be overcome which is seen in the efforts of the government and other institutions to provide affordable computers. Using computers can ease the pressure on the teacher who has to control a class of 60 plus students, as the computer can be used to effectively channelise their attention.

According to Askov and Bixler, (1998:179)

'Technology has the potential to assist teachers in meeting the literacy needs of diverse populations of students by contributing to learner-centered teaching approaches and transforming the role of the instructor from a direct deliverer of instruction to a facilitator of learning.'

1.1.1.2 Learner centered: with the help of computers the classroom can become more learner centered as the focus is on the students and the teacher's role is that of a guide who controls the proceedings. Once the student learns the use of the computer for language learning, s/he can use it to practice his/her own language exercises independently. The student can report to the teacher who can then check on the progress of the student. This eases the burden on the teacher who cannot devote individual time to so many students in giving extra practice in listening and for the student,
the computer works as a *motivational tool* that enables him/her to learn independently, e.g. text-to-speech software reads a text aloud highlighting each word as it reads, so the student can use this to listen to the texts that have been dealt with in the class. Computer learning can be self paced, letting the learner decide when to move on.

'**Wanting to learn**' – motivation, enthusiasm, interest, enjoyment, fun learning. As shown by Ellington et al (2003:179), computer based learning systems can be highly attractive to use, with colourful and impressive images on the screen, interesting sounds and graphics, fascinating tasks to try and the knowledge that there will be immediate feedback from the system every time one interacts with it. In other words, people *enjoy* working with such learner resources. Thus with computers students 'want' to learn and not 'have' to learn.

1.11.3 **Tireless:** what a human being cannot do a computer can do as far as rote repetitions are concerned. If you ask a human teacher to repeat a word s/he will do it properly for the first few repetitions say 5-7 times, then there will be the factor of tiredness and irritability and then when there is the question of repeating many words endlessly, humans have their limitations but this drab task can be done endlessly and tirelessly by the computer. E.g. for learning the pronunciation of a word the best way is to listen to it as many times as possible. This task of repeating a word say 10, 20, 40 times can be done effortlessly by the speech assisted computer programs like the talking dictionaries.

According to N.J.Rushby (as in Eraut.M, 1989:150), computer-assisted learning offers a means of providing endless drill and practice without repetition, at a pace that can be controlled by the learner. It is possible to arrange that the nature of the exercises depends on the learner's progress.
Thus, as he or she learns and his or her accuracy and speed improve, the exercises can become more difficult or conversely, if the learner makes too many mistakes, they can be made easier. Recurring mistakes can be detected and the computer can adapt the pattern of exercises to rectify this weakness. This ability to tailor a drill and practice session to the progress of each learner, combined with helpful feedback can lead to more effective learning.

1.11.4] *Future companion*: in today's world, life without a computer is very difficult. When the student completes his/her graduation, the computer is going to be an integral part of his/her professional life. So, knowledge of using the computer is now incorporated into the school curriculum almost everywhere. But here we would like to emphasize on knowing the use of computer for improving his/her language skills even after graduation e.g. using the Oxford Talking Dictionary to check on the proper pronunciation of words when s/he needs to give a presentation.

1.11.5] *Versatile i.e. All-in-one*: the computer combines the best of the teaching aids for listening, i.e. a tape-recorder, television, video player, VCD player and DVD player. In a tape recorder it is difficult to get to a certain point as one has to keep on rewinding or forwarding but in a computer the lesson can be divided into frames and just one click will open the desired unit. The tape recorder has no visuals to match the sound produced. The computer on the other hand can combine various functions like visuals and sound, listening and reading, reading and speaking. As far as T.V. is concerned the language programmes come at a particular time only. If you miss them they can be seen only if recorded earlier but the computer is flexible you have to insert a cd / vcd / dvd and you can watch it
as many times as you want to or they can be accessed anytime of the day or night i.e.24/7 on the internet.

1.11.6 Communicator: In Video Conferencing Technology, two or more people at different locations can see and hear each other at the same time, sometimes even sharing computer applications for collaboration. Videoconferencing offers possibilities for schools, colleges, and libraries to use these systems for a variety of purposes, including formal instruction (courses, lessons, and tutoring), connection with guest speakers and experts, multi-school project collaboration, professional activities, and community events. [www2.csd.org/newlinks/whatisvidconf.htm-15Nov, 08]. This helps video and audio communication thus if a student makes friends on line with students from English speaking countries just like the pen pal system {wherein one made friends abroad and communicated via letters} the student can converse with the other student. This will help in the listening as well as speaking skills. In the same way the student can communicate with the language teacher too if s/he has any problems and the teacher can attend to the same from home at a convenient time.

Use of computer assisted technologies can transform the process of teaching and learning by playing an important role. This research propagates a fusion approach as the need of the hour which is a blend of good teaching techniques + a motivated learner + effective computer assisted technologies. This will change the dynamics of the school classroom and produce individuals who are fully competent and ready to face the future as they are equipped with all the relevant skills that are a part of the fast evolving Information Society.

According to the researcher computer technologies can be used in this type of fusion approach for language teaching in general and for listening skills
in particular as this would become most viable in situations where there is a paucity of good English language teachers namely the rural areas. This approach is also most suitable when dealing with mixed classes, students with multiple intelligences and for students who are slow learners.

The computer can cater to individual needs and the teacher works as a guide monitoring the progress of his/her students from time to time. Depending on each student’s need, suitable input can be provided from beginner's level to advanced levels. Thus, each student of a class will use the computer technologies as per his/her requirement. The teacher will assign the activities and then periodically check on the pupils' progress. These tasks could be done in the pupils’ spare time as a computer is an almost essential part of each and every home today. This would work as reinforcement, but the student would not be totally on his/her own devices as the technologies would help to provide the needed input with the relevant expertise (examples of the same will be provided in Chapter-2). But an important aspect for the success of this kind of approach is undoubtedly student motivation as the student has to do his/her work diligently to obtain the desired results. The teachers' role is that of a guide, motivator, mentor but the final onus of learning rests with the students as they should have the drive to acquire the language skills.

### 1.12 LIMITATIONS OF THE COMPUTER

N.J.Rushby (as in Eraut.M, 1989: pg.150), says that the ability of the computer to adapt and respond to learner’s needs is much greater than that of a book or videotape, but which is still less than that of a real tutor. Although it may be less impersonal than a tape/slide, it should not be regarded as a substitute for another human being.
1.13 RESEARCH QUESTION
Different types of educational aids have been used in traditional teaching like tape-recorder, television, Overhead projector, and video. Their use, though has been very limited and teachers find the chalk and talk and textbooks alternative more feasible. In their day to day life the teaching fraternity makes full use of the modern technological advancements like the computer, computerized databases, the web, internet, e-mail and various search engines which are all a part of normal routine work. But the question arises as to whether they do the same in their classes? We see a broad divide between life inside the classroom and the realities of the outside world. The present research is an attempt to focus on the issue of using computer technology in the teaching-learning of the listening skill to facilitate and enhance the acquiring of the same.
Thus the research question can be formulated as follows:
RQ: Can the use of computer technology help in enhancing the acquisition of the listening skill in English language learning?

1.14 STATEMENT OF THE HYPOTHESES
1] The listening skill is neglected in English language teaching-learning, but it is an important skill for language acquisition
2] Computer aided learning can be beneficial to the teacher as well as the student.
3] Varied computer technologies can motivate the students as the learning becomes interesting and with proper guidance from the teacher the student can become an independent self learner who can learn at his/her own pace.
4] Acquiring of the listening skill can be enhanced with the help of computer technologies especially the internet.
1.15 PREVIOUS STUDIES

By taking up this topic for research, the researcher is moving into more or less uncharted territory. The previous studies on this topic are not elaborate or detailed. The studies are limited, this being a new concept as also using computer technology is not that widespread in education and teaching in India. Many people in the teaching field are hostile and downright derisive of the idea of using computer technology in their teaching as they feel that this is an attempt to replace them and also they feel that this will undermine their importance as sages on the stage. The researcher has seen that many with whom she has had contact with, view the computer as an untamed wild beast, from which they prefer to stay away. Use of computers is said to be a waste of time. Thus in this scenario especially in Indian conditions, previous studies are few and the researcher hopes to effectively show how using computer technology in teaching the English language especially to acquire listening skills can be a boon for the teaching fraternity.

According to Holum and Gahala (NCREL: Critical Issue) relatively few thorough studies have evaluated the efficacy of new technologies for literacy education. For example, a review by Kamil and Lane (1998, as in NCREL: Critical Issue) examined literacy research during the years between 1990 and 1995. This review looked at four mainstream journals with the highest citation rates for literacy research: Reading Research Quarterly, Journal of Literacy Research, Written Communication, and Research in the teaching of English. In the two reading journals- Reading Research Quarterly, Journal of Literacy Research, only 1 percent of the articles dealt with technology issues. In the two writing journals- Written Communication, and Research in the teaching of English, only 5 percent of the articles dealt with technology issues. Kamil and Lane note,
"Research into the problems and processes of literacy and technology has advanced little beyond what it was 10 years ago". They add further that "It is too late to ask questions as whether we should allow students' access to the Internet. Rather, we should be conducting research that asks questions such as, 'What does it take to use Internet connections successfully in teaching literacy?'" (p.339).

[http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/content/entareas/readin g/li300.htm]

The present research is an attempt to answer one of such a kind of a question.

1.16 PLACE OF RESEARCH

**AL JAMEA TUS SAIFIYAH, SURAT.**

*Al Jamea Tus Saifiyah* is an Arabic Academy situated in the diamond and textile city of Gujarat, Surat. It is an epitome of the educational movement [initiated and developed in Egypt by the Fatemi Imams] which was transferred to Yemen from Egypt and then came to India in 1539 AD. It is based on a thousand years old Fatemi educational system practiced in North Africa and Egypt and more particularly mirrored at Al Azhar and Darul- ilm educational institutions of Cairo. Admission to the institution is exclusively limited to students of the Dawoodi Bohra community. Here Arabic is the medium of instruction for traditional subjects but all other subjects like Mathematics, Pure Sciences and Social Sciences are taught in English. English is a compulsory subject in the curriculum till graduation, which is a period of eleven years. Students come to the academy after they have completed studies till class VII of a regular school. They are selected after a series of rigorous tests. Another factor important to the research
is that students come from different states of India as well as from
countries like US, UK, France, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, UAE and African
countries like Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar etc. Thus, it is a
heterogynous group of boys and girls having learnt English from
different schools.

The research has wider implications in this scenario as it is not an easy
task to deal with the learning needs of a mixed group of students who
have studied in different states of India, with teachers having different
accents e.g. a student from Bangalore or Chennai would have teachers
speaking English with a South Indian accent whereas a student from
Kolkata would most probably have listened to teachers with a Bengali
accent. So overall it can be said that the group selected for the study is
a part of the whole. It can stand for any part of India or any school in
India which teaches English as an ESL.

Is a single English teacher enough to meet the varying needs of the
pupils? How can a computer supplement the teacher’s teaching and be
an invaluable aide in the process of teaching – learning so that each
and every student gets equal attention and learning opportunities as
well as help the weaker students stay abreast with the syllabus and the
level of the class. The current research aims to find answers to many
such related questions so that the educational fraternity can also derive
maximum benefits from the rapidly emerging and fast developing
trends in technology.
1.17 DEFINITIONS OF RELATED TERMS

1.17.1 Software: According to Wikipedia

‘Computer software consists of the programs, or lists of instructions, that control the operation of a computer.’ Application software can be used for the following purposes:

- As a productivity/business tool
- To assist with graphics and multimedia projects
- To support household activities, for personal business, or for education
- To facilitate communications

1.17.2 Computer programs (also software programs, or just programs) are instructions for a computer. A computer requires programs to function. Moreover, a computer program does not run unless its instructions are executed by a central processor; however, a program may communicate an algorithm to people without running. Computer programs are usually executable programs or the source code from which executable programs are derived (e.g., compiled). (Wikipedia)

1.17.3 The Internet: According to Wikipedia,

The Internet is a global system of interconnected computer networks that interchange data by packet switching using the standardized Internet Protocol Suite (TCP/IP). It is a "network of networks" that consists of millions of private and public, academic, business, and government networks of local to global scope that are linked by copper wires, fiber-optic cables, wireless connections, and other technologies. The Internet carries various information resources and services, such as electronic mail, online chat, file transfer and file sharing, online gaming, and the inter-
linked hypertext documents and other resources of the World Wide Web (WWW). The terms Internet and World Wide Web are often used in everyday speech without much distinction. However, the Internet and the World Wide Web are not one and the same. The Internet is a global data communications system. It is a hardware and software infrastructure that provides connectivity between computers. In contrast, the Web is one of the services communicated via the Internet. It is a collection of interconnected documents and other resources, linked by hyperlinks and URLs.

1.17.4 Search engines: According to Wikipedia,

A Web search engine is a search engine designed to search for information on the World Wide Web. Information may consist of web pages, images, information and other types of files. Some search engines also mine data available in news books, databases, or open directories. Unlike Web directories, which are maintained by human editors, search engines operate algorithmically or are a mixture of algorithmic and human input.

1.17.5 Text to speech: According to Wikipedia,

A text-to-speech (TTS) system converts normal language text into speech; other systems render symbolic linguistic representations like phonetic transcriptions into speech. Speech synthesis is the artificial production of human speech. A computer system used for this purpose is called a speech synthesizer, and can be implemented in software or hardware.

1.18 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research is bound by a number of limitations. One of these limitations is that this study has been conducted on females only. This study covers the role of computer technology in enhancing the acquisition of listening skills alone.
This study concentrates on using a limited number of computer resources namely those that are easily available and easy to use by the students. The other resources though mentioned in have not been used as part of the study module of the research work. The students taken for this research study are studying through English medium and have a basic knowledge of operating the computer. Thus, role of students who do not know the use of computers has not been taken into account.

1.19 CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have seen the importance of learning the English language for an individual’s personal, professional and social development. We saw the various advantages and applications of a computer in general day to day life as well as in education and especially in English language learning. In the Indian scenario where there is a scarcity of good language teachers, the computer can be an invaluable tool due to its versatility and be of help both to the teacher as well as the student in the teaching – learning of the listening skill. In the next chapter we will review the literature related to computer technologies and how they can help in enhancing the acquisition of the listening skill of learners'.