

Collaborative Learning Platform for Armenian Educators: Bridging
Pedagogy and Technology

by

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Abstract

This capstone project investigates the digital resource utilization by EFL teachers across

Armenia for educational content distribution, resource finding, cooperation and professional development. It examines how teachers currently use digital platforms, what problems they face, and what kind of support they still need. The research focuses on three main educational institutions, one located in Yerevan (Global Bridge) and two in regional areas (TNY Educational Center and Invest), in order to examine current digital engagement practices, the challenges teachers face, and their specific needs. The study uses field observations, direct interviews and focus group discussions to reveal the difficulties teachers encounter when trying to access efficient platforms for resource finding and lesson planning. The aim of this project is to analyze how online platforms are currently used by Armenian EFL teachers and, based on these insights, develop a user-friendly digital platform that serves a space for professional development where teachers can both access and share educational resources and stay informed about innovative teaching practices.

Keywords: EFL teaching, teacher development, digital resources, collaboration, educational centers, digital resource utilization, Open educational platforms

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Collaborative Learning Platform for Armenian Educators:

Bridging Pedagogy and Technology

Education stands as a fundamental driving force in shaping societal futures, as it is one of the main components that provides the essential abilities, values and knowledge necessary for an individual's growth and professional success leading to the overall development of the country. Even though Armenia is working to modernize its educational system, there are still serious gaps remaining in foreign language teaching, particularly English.

According to the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia there are over 1,400 schools across the country, from which only about 35 are private, with most located in the capital city Yerevan. The majority of Armenian children learn in public schools, as most of them are free and accessible in nearly every region. The educational methods employed at various schools still rely on outdated teaching styles inherited from the Soviet era despite recent advancements. As a result, today's educational system often fails to meet the needs of students, largely due to the lack of structured, institutionalized teacher education, with the limited use of online platforms being only one contributing factor.

Although there aren't many of them, private educational centers teaching English in Armenia have become increasingly popular. Parents are more likely to register their children for courses like that because of the updated learning materials, innovative methods and smaller class sizes. In centers like that, the language is usually taught in a more interactive way, as the teachers put effort into finding relevant sources for each class and topic. The classes have a strong focus

on communication and real-world language use, because the presence of the internet and the smart use of it helps the teachers to be more innovative during their classes and after them.

The EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers stand in the middle of the educational gap between traditional and modern teaching. They should not only be just language instructors, but also role models for their students by the creative and effective use of the Internet. Even though their work is so important and they try very hard to be competitive in the 21st century, many EFL teachers working in private schools feel isolated in their profession. EFL teachers face numerous obstacles since they lack modern learning tools and limited access to professional development opportunities as well as collaboration possibilities with fellow professionals. Educational reforms in the nation fail to acknowledge the importance of EFL teachers even though their work directly contributes to student achievement.

As the education system continues to advance into the 21st century with a greater reliance on technology, the students have more options for their learning management system than their instructors do for their virtual learning environment. Students actually get to enjoy many features including the ability of sharing experiences, working on projects together as well as getting the required information for what they want to achieve. Learning tools that include Google Classroom, Quizlet, and other apps offer students functional tools that would help them to progress through their education effectively. However, teachers who form the most critical pillar of the education system currently do not have comparable convenient and effective platforms to meet their professional needs.

At the moment, there are multiple difficulties for educators to discover, filter, select, transform, and disseminate effective learning materials. It is a very time-consuming process

which may even take the teachers from one website, tool or repository to another. Teachers' current lack of easily navigable sources targeting them additionally burdens their workload and discourages development and cooperation. As today's educators need to quickly learn about new advancements in instructional practices and support tools, they should have access to the complex-effective solution to enhance their professional communication and to use versatile, customizable teaching aids.

Thus, my capstone project focuses on exploring how Armenian teachers use the internet not only for finding sources for their classes but also for professional development and resource sharing. Based on that research, I will be able to create a platform which will be a collaborating sphere for the EFL teachers. By examining current practices, analyzing EFL teachers' needs, challenges, and opportunities, this research seeks to identify patterns of online engagement among educators and propose a user-friendly online platform tailored specifically to support EFL teachers across Armenia. Such a platform would not only facilitate collaboration but also provide customizable tools and content, enabling EFL teachers to thrive in a modern educational environment. Through this research, the project aims to shed light on the role of technology in empowering Armenian educators and fostering a culture of collaboration, innovation, and professional growth across the nation with the help of the created sphere.

Literature review

First and foremost, the main focus of this research project is to analyze whether Armenian EFL educators use the Internet effectively and use it for their own development as well. This project aims to explore the differences in digital engagement, teaching practices and online platforms usage among three selected private language centers, from which two are

located in regional areas and one is based in the capital city Yerevan. The current situation and the lack of opportunities in resource finding and sharing for teachers establishes the need for an online platform that is developed specifically to make them spend less time on that process. A platform like that transforms teacher resource distribution by letting educators plan lessons together and incorporate media resources while gaining professional development skills through its features. Such a system provides educators with enlightenment coupled with time savings to create a more effective learning environment where proper targets exist. As most of the educators nowadays are more likely to start their career from a young age, it's sometimes hard for them to be involved in that resource finding process, as it includes not only searching through various websites, platforms and tools but also evaluating the relevance, credibility and quality of those materials. Completing this task and creating a sphere like that, is not only a chance, but the imperative for young teachers, so that they can sustain the challenges and requirements of contemporary pedagogy, as well as motivate their students. The literature review includes the analysis of a few different sections connected to the collaborative learning platform and its usage. Those are: Open Educational Resources and Their Potential, Cultural Dimensions of Digital Learning, Teacher Engagement and Resource Adaptation, Resource Finding Difficulties.

Open Educational Resources and Their Potential

Tang and Bao (2023) in their meta-analysis "Are Open Educational Resources (OER) and Practices (OEP) Effective in Improving Learning Achievement?" talk about the importance of open educational resources in EFL teaching and learning. The work synthesizes different findings of the studies and emphasizes the role of the effective online platforms and resources. Those findings show that one of the most effective ways of reducing the barriers in quality education is the usage of digital activities, online lesson plans and platforms providing different

games. They present different OER sources, and talk about each of their purposes. Platforms such as audiobooks, flipping books, TED-Eds, YouTube Channels, BBC podcasts etc, encourage active listening as they provide captions and extra activities after the content is delivered. Besides that, there are sources like Edpuzzle and PlayPosit, which work as post video or audio activity generators. The main role of websites like that is to help students show critical engagement with what they watch or hear and improve not only their cognitive and academic skills but also comprehension skills. The authors describe that the effectiveness of OER and OEP varies depending on how they are implemented both inside the classroom and out of it. Tang and Bao explain that OER and OEP require deliberate curriculum integration instead of mere replacement of standard teaching materials with free resources.

Cultural Dimensions of Digital Learning

Thorne (2003), through his article "Artifacts and cultures-of-use in intercultural communication," presents a valuable framework to examine how digital tools affect cross-cultural communication practices. The article illustrates different tools like email, forums and chat platforms and claims that they aren't just neutral technologies that people use, they reflect the values and habits of the different communities that use them. Most of the language learners have two main learning goals when utilizing these tools because they need to understand both the new language and the cultural rules associated with digital communication platforms. Through his "cultures-of-use" concept Thorne describes how digital platforms produce distinctive patterns of communication that require learners to comprehend for successful interaction. The study employs international student engagement to demonstrate how technology generates deep

exchanges and cross-cultural misunderstandings which provide substantial learning potential for students.

The main takeaway from this study demonstrates that technology-based teaching requires knowledge of the cultural contexts embedded in digital tools beyond basic tool usage. EFL instructors should not only encourage their students in using digital tools and understanding the cultural communication patterns within them, but also engage with those kinds of tools themselves first, in order to stay informed and culturally aware in their own teaching practice. Thorne's research advocates for technology implementation in language learning which is one of the main components that shapes communication, a dynamic process of exchanging ideas, values and cultural norms.

Teacher Engagement and Resource Adaptation

Mayer (2009), in his *Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning*, states that one of the biggest changes in distance learning is the integration of multimedia and interactive tools for learners at a young age. He argues that students learn best and also memorize perfectly when instructional content includes both words and visuals. This transformation from traditional teaching to the modern methods has led to the creation of a lot of different learning applications for students, such as Canva, Quizlet, Kahoot, Wordwall, Quizizz, Khan Academy and so many more. In more practical terms, Mayer's research demonstrates that learning operates as an active process through which students pick applicable content which they systemize into a clear framework that ties to existing knowledge bases. Thus, this method of incorporating multimedia into the process of learning, establishes the need of having well designed platforms, where both the students and the teachers will feel more comfortable to use.

However, Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme (2020), in their article "*Openness Re-examined: Teachers' Practices with Open Educational Resources in Online Language Teaching*," state that multimedia tools demonstrate positive effects when practitioners align them correctly with pedagogical approaches. Meaning that if the tools, resources and other online platforms are used ineffectively, they might even have the wrong effect leading students to have lack of motivation because of the amount of time they spend on the activity which teaches them nothing. The role of the online activities should not only be to make an interactive, engaging and ice breaking atmosphere in the classroom, but also it has to align with the goals of the lesson and fit into the concept of the lesson's objectives.

For instance, there are platforms that suggest already designed games or classroom activities, which are made for a specific grammar tense. However, most of the teachers use them without being able to edit and adapt them to match their specific lesson goals of the class, the students' actual language level. Thus, the usage of the activities like that may result in causing confusion during the lesson and making students feel disconnected from the rest of the class. It might also result in reinforcing students' use of the grammar tense incorrectly instead of supporting them to digest the information and use it in speech. Therefore, the effective usage of online teaching tools requires teachers to analyze existing resources because they need to be edited and adopted when they do not align with learning targets and requirements of the students.

González-Lloret (2020) in her "*Technology and Task-Based Language Teaching*" also talks about Open Educational Resources and the way it revolutionized modern teaching. She talks about the way both teachers and students perceive and approach the educational system with the increasing world of technology. Her research demonstrates that social interaction is the

key factor for language learning and she presents task-based methods as fundamental for virtual education. She brings examples of tasks that are at the same time meaningful and similar to real-life communication and explains that it's an essential method to enhance language development in an enjoyable way. When combined with technological resources these assigned tasks allow students to generate language within real-life situations and work together more efficiently with their classmates. The author mentions that this specific teaching style matches the principles of Open Educational Practices (OEP) by enabling flexible learning combined with creative assignments and learner-active sessions. Through that approach she demonstrates why educators should effectively use and combine digital resources with interactive learning platforms to enhance practical and collaborative language learning that keeps students engaged.

Hood (2018), at the same time in her “Personalising and localising knowledge” article evaluates teachers engagement while working with and modifying online websites, materials , sources, and shows how important it is to personalize each source not only for the specific class, but also for each student. The researcher studies two different online teacher platforms while developing a three-stage framework for knowledge reconstruction that includes selection modifications, implementation and embedding. The teaching process begins with selecting appropriate resources from the internet before adapting them to fit classroom requirements and before embedding them as enduring practices. The study brings substantial value by demonstrating how teachers should adapt digital resources to match their distinct teaching practices and customize educational content according to their learner demographics and institutional circumstances. Through individual practice teachers reconstruct knowledge which they obtain from digital platforms by means of reflection experimentation and contextual

adaptation according to Hood. The article reveals that many new teachers lack training to transform digital resources efficiently because they feel incapable of using these tools to their full potential by sticking to basic applications. This research significantly helps my final project because it demonstrates why teachers need both digital tool access and the skills and independence to modify these tools correctly for their specific EFL classroom environments.

Bortoluzzi and Marenzi (2017) examined EFL teachers' experience of internet material search in their research analysis called "Web searches for learning: How language teachers search for online resources." The research shows that even though teachers recognize the extensive digital content availability including grammar explanation videos, vocabulary worksheets, speaking activities, or listening tasks, they do understand that the process of finding suitable, reliable and valid resources comes with its difficulties. The process starts with the teacher, doing lesson planning for the upcoming class, and identifying the objectives of it. Once the areas of focus are clear based on the structured lesson plan and its needs, the teacher tries to separately make the list of sections, from which she needs to choose materials, meaning whether it's a grammar-based class, or includes vocabulary, writing, speaking and pronunciation as well. After that, the teacher already searches the title using keywords, such as the level, the age and of course the topic, for example "present simple worksheets for teenagers in beginner level." Looking at thousands of available sources, the teacher must carefully open and review each one to determine whether it aligns with the lesson objectives and aims, matches the students' language level, and maintains appropriate quality and relevance. This process is extremely time-consuming, as it involves not just finding resources and websites, but critically evaluating, analysing its content, structure, and adaptability to the specific classroom context. Based on

Bortoluzzi and Marenzi's (2017) research most of the teachers lack effective search strategies tailored to educational goals.

The main problem that the teachers encounter during the process of online resource finding as the author mentioned, is not being able to analyse whether the written level of the material truly matches their students' linguistic proficiency or not (Bortoluzzi & Marenzi, 2017.) For example, there are sources that are designed for EFL classrooms and there are also ESL based sources, meaning English as a foreign language for students and English as a second language. Resources are often mislabeled or created for different educational contexts, thus, at first sight it's hard to differentiate whether they are appropriate for that specific group or not. In addition, the structure and the organization of the activity may confuse teachers, as it might show a certain purpose and aim that the worksheet has, however when being used and implemented in a certain class, it might come out that the underlying purpose or instructional value of an activity is completely different. As a result, they may misapply the resource, for example, using a task designed for free speaking as controlled grammar practice, ultimately undermining the lesson's objectives.

Another common issue discussed in the article is the misalignment between the method embedded in the activity and the teacher's intended approach (Bortoluzzi & Marenzi, 2017.) For instance, a communicative task might be used in a setting that favors accuracy-focused drills, causing confusion for both the teacher and learners. Teachers also report challenges in adapting or sequencing found materials, especially when the content lacks scaffolding or assumes prior knowledge students may not possess (Bortoluzzi & Marenzi, 2017.) These difficulties are compounded by time constraints, lack of digital training, and the absence of centralized, curated platforms where high-quality and level-appropriate resources are readily available. Overall, the

process often becomes overwhelming, particularly for novice educators, and leads to inefficient planning, reduced confidence, and occasional instructional mismatches in the EFL classroom.

To meet some of these concerns, the use of different content creation websites, curation tools, sources and liveworksheets will be implemented in the proposed platform to help teachers create and embed multimedia resources into a lesson plan with relative ease. The will will give teachers the opportunity to be relevant with up-to-date techniques and help them to see how these tools can be used beneficially in the classroom instead of how they may become a distraction. For instance, symbols, illustrations, videotapes, and animated models will be incorporated in teaching, enhancement of course content to ensure the students grasp the lesson adequately. In addition, the support of adaptive learning technologies must be a feature of the intended platform. These technologies pinpoint learning needs and respond by adapting the material being taught of the learning process to the requirements and rate of the special learner. This is especially beneficial in a blended environment that allows students to have distinct access to materials and differing speed limits to learn.

Thus, the research reveals that while online educational platforms, resource-sharing tools and blended learning environments have the potential to transform education, there are several challenges that remain for teachers. Those challenges include inadequate support for teachers and a lack of culturally relevant resources that align with the local teaching context and students' backgrounds, as well as limited features for collaboration. The identified gaps hopefully will be targeted by my capstone project to provide benefits to educators as well as contribute to the creation of the supportive, comprehensive, and friendly online environment. With the aid of

these effective social learning features, the platform I propose will enable teachers to excel in blended learning education models thus improving the learning outcomes for all stakeholders.

Research Questions

The main goal of this capstone project is to analyze how educators in Armenia currently utilize online collaborative tools specifically within Armenian private educational centers and the framework being used in each of them. The primary focus of the project is to analyse the whole structure of digital usage around Armenian EFL classrooms and to compare whether there is difference around the city center or rural areas. The essential nature of digital tools in modern times makes it vital to investigate how Armenian instructors use internet resources for not only collaborative work in their classes but also for their own professional development and resource exchange. The study aims to answer several important research questions.

1. How do Armenian EFL (English as a second language) educators use the internet to enhance their teaching practices while assigning homework and foster professional growth?
 - What platforms, tools, or resources do most of the educators commonly employ?
 - What's the estimated time that the teachers spend on finding sources and adopting them?
 - How effectively do these tools meet their needs for collaboration, innovation, and teaching support?
 - What difficulties do educators face in implementing these resources into their classrooms based on their teaching philosophy?

2. What role does online platform usage and all in all the digital sphere play in shaping the teaching practices of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) educators in Armenia?
 - How do EFL teachers in Armenia use online tools to develop lesson plans, share resources, and encourage collaboration in peer learning?
 - To what extent are these tools tailored to the unique needs of Armenian EFL educators and their students?
3. What are the main problems that EFL teachers face while utilizing the digital world in their teaching, and how do they picture to make that process easier?
 - What are the potential benefits and challenges of designing a centralized digital platform designed specifically to meet the needs of Armenian educators?
 - How can such a platform address existing gaps in the collaborative digital space for teachers?
 - What features would make this platform teacher-friendly, culturally relevant for Armenian generations, and pedagogically effective?

Thus, a platform like that will address the existing gaps, help teachers spend less time on searching for different sources, editing them in order to adapt to Armenian culture and pedagogy and of course be the perfect opportunity for the teachers professional development. The main thing that the platform stands for is its user-friendliness, so that it will meet the specific needs of not only experienced teachers, but also novice educators. The other objective of the platform is to encourage the users to create and share materials which will be tailored to Armenian culture, as most of the articles and sources include nothing about Armenia.

Methodology

As the main objective of this study is to examine Armenian EFL teachers' utilization of digital resources and materials and at the same time encouraging teachers to collaborate for professional growth, it requires mainly qualitative research methodology. The structured research includes three different methods, which were observed and taken into account from 3 educational centers:

1. Interviews from EFL instructors
2. Focus group discussions between teachers
3. Classroom observations

These methods will provide a sophisticated understanding about teaching professionals who find, modify and deploy digital instructional materials across urban and rural educational contexts.

Due to the limited timeframe of the study I have been unable to visit more than 3 educational centers. However, before even conducting the research, I purposefully selected those three centers to produce comparative results by placing two centers within urban areas and the one in a regional area to note their teaching practice similarities and differences. The approach allowed me to identify the major obstacles and institutional differences between the centers, which provided valuable insight into the specific needs of each context. This understanding played a key role while designing platform features because it allowed the creation of an effective system ensuring that all of the educators in urban and regional areas could benefit.

Qualitative Data Collection Methods

To highlight the reason why I chose qualitative research Costa and Almeida's (2022) work supports how qualitative approaches allow researchers to identify complex educational

phenomena since they capture the full depth of educational events particularly when studies focus on dynamic or socially embedded settings. My research design required this qualitative research approach because it gave me access to understand Armenian EFL teachers' perspectives and practices regarding digital tools within their educational setting which otherwise could not be revealed through numerical or general data.

Interviews

According to Wortham et al. (2011), in the qualitative research process, interviews have a fundamental role of helping to gather in-depth insights into the participants' perspectives and ideologies. An interview can be designed in a structured way, semi-structured or without any structure, providing varying interests and freedom to participants. What makes semi-structured interviews effective in educational research is that they combine a structure with the chance for participants to state their opinions in their own way (Wortham et al. 2011.) Using this method allows for gathering detailed data that guides the creation of specific educational tools and platforms.

The stage of interviewing educators gave the opportunity to identify different methods they were implementing in their classrooms, while searching for different sources. The educators were from different centers teaching different age groups and levels, so that I could analyze the system in its depth. Through these discussions I selected information about how teachers face their daily experiences and which digital collaboration and professional development methods succeed or fail and which elements are lacking. The teachers willingly communicated their digital resource usage and the issues that arise during their digital work. The entire assessment process confirmed participants received careful and well-chosen questions in addition to deep respect from me. The participants agreed to reveal their names in the study, that's why they filled

out a consent form before their interviews, with fully being aware of what that information was going to be used for. The process of taking the interviews and observing their responses made a significant impact on the development of my research analysis and later on the digital program, as the teachers were happy to contribute to the program which later will make their work easier.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussion is one of the valuable qualitative methods for gathering collective insight, as there are dynamics in the discussion creating natural, unpredictable and spontaneous responses (Bachtiar, 2024.) When the aim of research is to understand people's shared experiences and analyze each of the problems they face, focus group discussions are the best option to collect that data. It allows them to build on each other's experiences, thoughts and beliefs, and reveal collective concerns, which might not even be touched upon in case of an individual interview (Bachtiar, 2024.) This dynamic interaction between the interviewees enables researchers to identify not only what participants' opinion is, but also how they relate to and reflect on each other's perspectives, which is a very essential element in the process of designing a responsive educational platform.

My role as the Young Learners sphere coordinator among dedicated educators in TNY requires deep interaction with teachers through regular examinations and classroom challenge discussions as well as delivery of new updates and feedback. All the educators constantly have meetings with the coordinators, where they get individual help with all of the problems they face while working as an EFL teacher. As most of the problems I encountered as a coordinator were always about digital platforms, literacy, I decided to conduct deep research not only by examining the situation in the TNY Educational center, but also in other centers. Thus, because of all of those problems and issues that the teachers faced during their previous experiences, we

had focus group discussions, which helped them to open up better, share their problems, find solutions, suggest alternatives and analyze each other's work. Those discussions helped all of the instructors to approach educational methodology from different perspectives. Through discussions we surpassed basic data gathering to develop together a shared vision about how a platform must be designed to fulfill our genuine requirements. Thus, the focus group discussions not only contributed to my research project but they also built mutual understanding between participants that contributed in developing a teacher-centric design for the platform.

Classroom Observations

Classroom observation is a crucial method in qualitative research that allows researchers to find out how the theoretical ideas and previously discussed practices are actually applied in real classroom settings. According to Bushi (2024), classroom observations play a vital role not only in evaluating the effectiveness of various instructional methods, but also identifying opportunities for pedagogical improvement, such as technological integration. After conducting the interviews and gathering information about the process of teachers collecting sources, adopting them and creating new ones even, it was time for checking its implementation in the classroom already. That's why I had a few observations in the classes in Global Bridge and also in Invest. Observations in the different classrooms helped me document how teachers try to implement digital educational tools both during their classes and after them when assigning them homework. The observations revealed concrete insights about online platform implementation in classrooms as the purpose was to see whether the methods and materials were being used in alignment with their intended educational purpose and if they effectively supported the learning goals. The gathered information from this study enhanced the qualitative research outcomes to create a complete view of digital collaboration practices in Armenian educational institutions.

The Platform Creation Methodology

These findings became the foundations for developing a prototype platform which specifically targets Armenian EFL teachers during the project's conclusion. The platform integrates locally relevant and culturally appropriate materials while encouraging professional collaboration and development between teachers. The purpose and the whole design of the platform is created in a way so that it would be as user friendly as possible, which will in its turn save time for the teachers and make their job easier. The platform aims to fill the discovered gaps with the sharing of resources, collaboration, and teachers' professional training, and serve as an area for endless opportunities. As it's sometimes difficult for the teachers to find out sources with context of which matches Armenian students' cultural background, the platform aims to be a sphere where the educators will share their own created games, activities and presentations. Thus, the project of research as well as its implementation aims at offering significant help to the teachers in the Armenian system of education.

To reach this vision, the application is developed as an open-access platform, where it can be integrated into easily usable platforms such as Google Classroom or any other, which facilitates sharing of resources and collaboration between teachers. The process of the development includes different sections such as the selection of the platform, the setup of the sections, designing features and the layout.

1. Platform Selection and Setup

The first phase when starting the process includes the choice of the main platform, which will be used in the construction of the prototype. My research shows that the best option for now would be Google Classroom, which will be the main focused area as it is a rather basic, all-in-one platform to coordinate classrooms as well as resources. Once the platform was selected it became fixed in order to enable formation of the class in line with the EFL teachers.

2. Designing Interactive Features and Layout

During this phase I concentrated more on designing features for collaboration. As the aim of the project is to create a platform, which will be visually compelling one, and at the same time easy for teachers to navigate, this phase was one of the most important ones to be completed. It has to be simple enough so that the teachers can easily find the required sources and be able to adopt them. It's also important to have a platform which has a great layout, again allowing teachers to create lesson plans and upload them to share with the other educators as well. Synchronous work areas are developed as well, where teachers can be able to suggest what should be viewed, written or changed as their collective content, and provide feedback for other teachers. Professional discussion boards and forums are designed as well, which will facilitate discussions, where educators will discuss with one another as many concerning issues as they want and hear various opinions.

Such methods will establish concrete precise and detailed procedures for the platform which will lead to improvements in the time management process for teachers as well as

enhanced collaboration and professional development. Thus, with a well-designed platform, Armenian EFL teachers will create an enriched community environment where they can execute their teaching role swiftly as a collective group.

Research Findings and Analysis

Contextual Overview of Participating Centers

This section provides a brief contextual overview of the three educational centers that participated in the study. Each center represents a unique teaching environment, two located in cities and one in a regional area, offering valuable insight into the diverse practices, challenges, and resource usage patterns among Armenian EFL educators.

TNY Educational Center (located in Vagharshapat)

TNY Educational Center, where I currently work as an Educational manager of the young learners sphere, primarily focuses on educating schoolchildren and youth starting from 7 to 18 years old. The center's main goal is to prepare all the students for Cambridge official exams such as KET, PET, FCE, and CAE. TNY also stands out for its commitment to teacher development, as it actively encourages its educators to take certification exams like TKT (Teaching Knowledge Test), FCE (First Certificate in English), CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), and DELTA (Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). This emphasis on professional growth ensures high-quality education for students. The focus on developing professionalism enables high educational standards for students. The center provides students with English language education through classes covering General English, TOEFL, IELTS and SAT materials and professional development initiatives that help students prepare

their educational and professional paths. Under the general courses students study programs developed by Oxford, Cambridge, Pearson, Macmillan Education and National Geographic Learning together with Collins English for Life.

Global Bridge Educational Center (located in Yerevan)

Global Bridge Educational Centre, was established in 2007 in Yerevan, and initially worked as a private school. Today, the institution functions as one of the top educational institutions in Armenia through its expansion into a multilevel institution that educates students from preschool to high school and offers English language programs. The center suggests language courses in multiple formats, both in-person and online, and has sessions for students preparing for major exams like TOEFL and IELTS. Besides academic programs, Global Bridge also provides support to the students who aim to study abroad by offering consulting services for university applications and international language programs. Through their collaboration with international schools like The Regent's School in Thailand, the center helps Armenian students access scholarship opportunities, opening doors to global education experiences.

Invest Educational Center (located in Ararat region, in Artashat)

Invest Educational Center which is located in Ararat region, specifically in Artashat, is one of the biggest centers in the whole region. Invest educational center recently got its license by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia. The center is mainly specialized in two spheres

The first one is Teaching English to school children and creating an opportunity for growth and academic development, by helping them apply for competitive universities not only in Armenia but also abroad. Thus the commonly used programs are designed by Cambridge, Oxford, Pearson etc.

The other area where Invest is specialized in is working with adults, targeting individuals starting from 20 years old, who are currently employed in different spheres, such as business, healthcare, education etc. Invest suggests personalized programs for learners who want to improve their international collaboration skills or want to get certification or gain professional communication confidence.

How Teachers Find, Choose and Use Resources - Urban and Rural Areas

My research revealed the process of how Armenian EFL teachers find and apply their teaching resources to be the most relevant and powerful aspect in their classes. Teacher preparation requires teachers to implement multiple creative problem-solving approaches and personal teaching strategies as I observed them during the various stages of my study involving interviews and classroom observations and group discussions. Throughout my interviews, classroom observations, and group discussions, I observed that teacher preparation involves a blend of creative problem-solving and personalized teaching strategies. After conducting research in three educational centers and hearing the teachers' concerns it became obvious that resource finding is considered as a complex, time-consuming, and often emotionally challenging process. However, when having the right tools and strategies, it can be an enjoyable and fulfilling process.

Rural Center: Resource Usage and Methodology (Invest Educational Center)

The basic way, which most of the teachers search for a specific source is searching and using the ones that appear first, not making sure whether it's actually level based, age based or culturally appropriate for the group. In the Invest Educational Center, Miss Anna mentioned that

before starting her career, she didn't get any background in the form of training, which would help her in that process. She mentioned that they conduct focused searches yet lack proper frameworks so they get boundless digital content, webs and sources using limited assistance systems with minimal professional training. She also said that they perform their late-night searches while testing worksheets, previewing grammar explanation videos and evaluating lesson formats, so that everything would be relevant during the class. She mentioned that most of the students in the regions prefer not to spend that much money on buying the original books, which provide them an excess to a well-designed platform with its activities created by the publisher. They choose printed books rather than original books, which of course doesn't give them the chance to use the designed online activities, games and worksheets. That is why, teachers in rural areas have to put more effort in the process of finding sources that will directly help them to practice and digest the covered material in the class by the teacher. And as it is a really time-consuming process, in most of the cases in rural areas resource selection depends on personal choices beyond technical standards since it carries individual factors from experience through access and context. During the interview with Miss Anna, through careful observation, it became clear how educators approached their chosen sources during lessons. The research revealed patterns in how teachers selected and applied materials, often shaped by their classroom context and available tools. Most of the materials that the teachers used were not contextually matching to the students background, meaning that for example the grammar source which the teacher was using in order to practice a certain grammar tense, was about geopolitics, which was difficult to master for the teenagers.

Urban Centers: Resource Usage and Methodology

1. Global Bridge Educational Center

Before talking about resource utilization, it's important also to mention that there are significantly more educational centers in the cities than in the regional areas of Armenia. This automatically results in broader access to peer networks, updated teaching resources and social interactions. That's why educational centers in the cities tend to be more structured and better funded, which allows them to have more opportunities for teacher collaboration and development while having access to digital tools. Visiting Global Bridge Educational Center, which is one of the most famous institutions in Yerevan, I talked with Miss Jema, the educational manager of the center, who also taught adults. First of all she introduced that all of the students tend to get original books, which allows them to activate the online platform. Later, she introduced that the teachers in their center benefit from a more advanced teaching environment, as all of them get training before starting to teach. She said that both the teachers and the students have steady access to high-speed Internet, which in its own allows them to use tools like Google Classroom, Quizlet, Kahoot, Wordwall, Cambridge One and Pearson accounts. Miss Jema also mentioned about how she encourages her teammates to share with each other. She said that each day one teacher is supposed to prepare an activity for a certain level of the group and leave it on the desk so that everyone can take and use it whenever needed. She also emphasized that they implement platforms supporting video and audio integration such as YouTube and TED-Ed. These tools are not only used for classroom delivery but also assist in planning, assigning homework, and student feedback.

2. TNY Educational Center

TNY Educational Center, which is located in Vagharshapat and has its branch in Yerevan as well, has more than 400 students attending. Working in this center and coordinating the young learners sphere, I have the opportunity to work with the other educational managers as well, with whom we have created one of the most effective systems for educational workload. And even though I didn't have separate interviews with the teachers, I conducted focus group discussions between the teachers working with different levels and ages, to have a better analysis of how they use the sources. The main platform with which the teachers are sharing all the resources and assigning homework to their students is Google Workspace. All of the students have access to the platforms based on the chosen program of their group and get subscriptions of online story books from the administrative staff. The implementation of Google Docs, Meets, Drive etc. are also very useful in TNY, as the students are supposed to develop both their digital and handwritten test taking skills. At TNY Educational Center, resource finding and homework posting are part of a well-structured system carefully designed by the educational management team. This system seamlessly integrates communication and instructional tools, combining Telegram channels for direct contact with the students and Google Workspace with a lot of its tools. Thus, homework posting is not a separate or informal task but part of a streamlined process. Teachers are required to systematically upload homework assignments to Google Classroom, often accompanied by additional learning materials such as YouTube videos, interactive worksheets, or vocabulary banks. Although this process can be time-consuming, each assignment is carefully aligned with classroom content and thoughtfully adapted to match the students' proficiency level and learning needs.

Difficulties Faced by Teachers and Need Based Suggestions

Throughout this project, I had the opportunity to sit down with teachers, observe their classrooms, and take part in honest, open conversations during our focus group discussions. What was clear after my research, is whether the teacher was in a well-equipped city center or working in a smaller regional school, she does huge work before each of the time she enters a class. Another thing that was obvious after the research was that all of the teachers, whether working in cities or regional areas, face difficulties, such as time constraints and limited access to relevant sources. These challenges not only reflect individual struggles but also point to broader systemic issues in Armenia's EFL teaching landscape.

1. **Time constraints:** Teachers consistently reported spending excessive time browsing multiple websites before finding a usable resource.
2. **Mismatch in content:** Many resources did not align with student age, level, or cultural background, requiring time-consuming adjustments.
3. **Restriction to edit the sources:** Most of the websites do not allow the teacher to edit the source and make it relevant for her own class.
4. **Lack of Armenian-contextualized resources:** Many materials are designed for ESL or international contexts and do not reflect the realities, interests, or cultural background of Armenian students.
5. **Lack of collaboration:** Teachers, especially in regional centers, expressed a need for peer exchange.
6. **Technical limitations:** Some teachers lacked digital literacy or training to confidently use platforms like Edpuzzle, Wordwall, or Kahoot.

7. **Internet access:** Most of the centers in the regional areas do not have the opportunity to provide internet connection to their students, because of being small or financially not stable.
8. **Overload of choices:** Teachers often felt overwhelmed by the quantity of online material without knowing how to evaluate its quality or applicability.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

Being an AUA student and having this opportunity to do this research study was a time of hard work, dedication and enjoyment for me, but like all of the studies, mine had its limitations as well, some of which I revealed during each stage of my capstone preparation. One of the biggest challenges was simply not having sufficient time while working as a full-time educational manager. I would really enjoy the process of visiting more educational institutions, especially in different parts of Armenia, and spend more time observing what was happening inside the classrooms. However, with the limited time, it was difficult to expand the research beyond a few selected centers or to conduct deeper, more analytical classroom observations across various regions. I focused on a few centers around Armenia that gave me valuable insights and opportunities to develop my final platform, but I know that there's still so much more to observe and learn, especially from other rural areas or urban centers outside of Yerevan.

One of my interview arrangements with a Global Bridge teacher did not go according to the initial plan, as at the allocated time, an emergency occurred and the teacher couldn't give an interview. I needed to find another acceptable professional due to conflicting schedules from Global Bridge, so I turned to a different school to work with someone who met my research

standards. The successful resolution showed me the significance of being flexible in qualitative research practices. Additional voices of course could significantly add value to my project through extended sources including both teachers, students and parents if I possessed greater time and resources. The complete understanding of EFL teaching practices in Armenia requires data input from teachers along with their students and parents. The project utilized solely qualitative methods such as focus groups, interviews and observations to obtain exhaustive detailed information. Future studies would benefit from a survey or quantitative data addition which could facilitate larger-scale comparisons.

Conclusion

This research project studied Armenian EFL educators' experiences in navigating complex online resources and their dependence on teaching environment needs and obstacles for resource seeking, evaluation and implementation. The research combined in-depth interviews with classroom observations alongside focus group discussions to identify educational practices as well as teacher emotions including feelings of frustration alongside hopes and a profound sense of student outcome responsibility. The findings demonstrate that seeking appropriate educational resources exceeds typing generic search terms on the Internet. Teachers need both strong search skills supported by digital literacy skills to effectively carry out this demanding process.

Although urban teachers benefit from greater access to digital tools and devices, they still face the same time-consuming pressures as the other teachers working in rural areas. The platform developed through this project, **EFL Connect Armenia** directly addresses these needs

by offering a shared space where teachers can access reliable resources, exchange ideas, and support one another, regardless of location or background.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Consent to participate in a capstone project conducted at the American University of Armenia (AUA). This is to state that I agree to participate in the capstone project conducted by Anush Grigoryan. The capstone director is Dr. Hourig Attarian of the College of Humanities & Social Sciences at AUA (tel.: 060 612769, email: hourig.attarian@aua.am).

PURPOSE: I have been informed that the purpose of the project is about pedagogical aspects used in public and private schools. Within the bigger context of the project, the interview conducted by Anush Grigoryan is meant to focus on the interviewee's teaching philosophies and classroom management.

PROCEDURES: I understand that the interview will be conducted in participants' homes or another appropriate place, and might be recorded on video. Alternatively, the interview may be conducted on Zoom or another online platform. As a participant, I will be asked to explore English as a Foreign Language (EFL) practices and various teaching methods. The interview will last from one to two hours, however, as a participant I am free to stop at any time, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the project at any given point. I understand that if I wish to extend the interview for more than two hours, I will be provided that opportunity.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: I understand that the interview involves the sharing of my personal views and opinions, which will be treated with the utmost care and consideration. I have been informed that I am free to stop, take a break or discontinue at any time. There are no risks involved in partaking in this interview.

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION: As a participant, I will have access to all the recorded material for verification purposes. Throughout the project, if and when the material produced is in Armenian, I will have the opportunity to review and verify the English translations.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without negative consequences.

I understand that the data from this project may be published in print or digital format for academic purposes.

In terms of **identification and reproduction** of my participation:

I agree to **disclose my identity**. I understand that my identity may be revealed in any publications or presentations that may result from this interview.

__ I agree to the reproduction of sound and images from this interview by any method and in any media for academic purposes (which may include webpages, documentary clips, etc.)

OR

__ I understand that my participation in this study is **confidential**. My identity will be concealed. I will be given a pseudonym in any publications or presentations that may result from this interview.

__ I agree that while data from my interview may be published, no sound or images from it may be reproduced.

When photographs, artifacts or documents are scanned or photographed

__ I agree to let the student researcher copy family photographs and documents for use in the student project.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.
I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

INTERVIEWEE:

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

INTERVIEWER:

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a capstone project participant, please contact Dr. Hourig Attarian of the College of Humanities & Social Sciences at AUA (tel.: 060 612769, email: hourig.attarian@aua.am).

Appendix B - Interview Guideline

Section 1: Background and Teaching Experience

- Can you introduce yourself and share a bit about your teaching background? Philosophy, teaching experience?
- What levels do you primarily teach? How old are they?
- Are you incorporating online or blended learning into your teaching ?

Section 2: Use of Online Resources & Platforms

- What online learning platforms or tools do you frequently use in your teaching?
- How do you typically find and select online resources for your lessons?
- Do your students help you find the sources, how do they help?
- Do you ask your st what they prefer , what they want.....
- Do you use open educational resources (OER)?
- If so, what types of resources do you find most useful?
- Have you ever contributed to or modified open educational resources? Why or why not?

Section 3: Engagement with Open Educational Practices (OEP)

- How comfortable are you with sharing your own lesson materials or teaching strategies online?
- Have you collaborated with other teachers to create or adapt online teaching resources? How?
- What challenges do you face when integrating open educational resources into your teaching?
- Do you think that using OER and online platforms has improved student engagement and learning outcomes? How has it improved ?

Section 4: Perceptions of Blended and Online Learning

- What are the biggest advantages and disadvantages of blended learning in your experience?
- Have you noticed any differences in student performance or engagement when using online resources versus traditional methods? How?
- What challenges do your students face when using online learning platforms?
- In your opinion, what are the key factors that make an online learning platform effective for teachers and students?
- What opportunities would you like to have while integrating online platforms in your teaching and learning?

Section 5: Professional Development and Future Trends

- Have you received any training on using online teaching platforms or OER? If so, how helpful was it?
- What support or resources would make it easier for you to integrate online learning into your teaching?
- How do you see the role of online platforms evolving in the future of education?
- If you could design an ideal online platform for teachers, what features would it have?
- What advice would you give to teachers who are new to using online resources in their teaching?