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## CREATING ONLINE VISUALS AND APPLYING THEM IN EFL CLASS

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***The given paper is devoted to the application of online visuals in EFL class in Armenian schools. Online visuals are generally interesting, creative, context simplifying tools the design of which provides the instructors and students an effective teaching-learning process as they are applied. There is a plethora of various online tools aimed at creating online visuals, just a few of them have been presented in the given paper: worksheets, infographics, mind maps and crosswords. The main objective of the study is to check the didactic potential of online visuals via the application of worksheets, infographics, mind maps and crosswords while teaching EFL in an Armenian setting. Language instructors can either create visuals by themselves (as we did) or take ready-made visuals to explain difficult topics, at the same time increasing the students' motivation, interest, creativity and productive skills. Based on our own experience we can claim that creating tailored online visuals and using them in teaching sessions is beneficial for both teachers and learners making teaching-learning more efficient and enjoyable.***

**Key words:** *online visuals, creating online visuals, applying online visuals, EFL (English as a foreign language), worksheets, infographics, mind maps, crosswords.*



***A picture is worth thousand words.***

## **INTRODUCTION**

The given paper is devoted to online visuals in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and their application in an EFL classroom in an Armenian setting.

Online visuals are generally interesting, creative, context simplifying tools the design of which provides the instructors and students an effective teaching-learning process as they are applied. Online visuals are widely used in the modern society in various fields. From the point of education, they are used for all levels of learning and teaching from pre-school education to post-graduate studies. They are effective for all types of subjects/ courses.

In the focus of our attention is applying online visuals, particularly worksheets, infographics, mind maps and crosswords in a foreign language class (EFL) in an Armenian setting.

**The main objective of the study** is to check the didactic potential of online visuals via the application of worksheets, infographics, mind maps and crosswords while teaching EFL in an Armenian setting.

## **METHODOLOGY**

During the research the following **methods** were applied:


- *theoretical*: study of relevant scientific literature and Internet sources;
- *social and pedagogical*: observation and monitoring of the teaching-learning process;
- *experimental*: conducting experimental teaching with the use of online visuals;
- *statistic*: statistical analysis of the data received.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The use of visuals is very important as it helps the teacher “to clarify, establish, correlate and coordinate accurate concepts, interpretations and appreciations, and enable him to make learning more concrete, effective, interesting, inspirational, meaningful and vivid”<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326652939\\_Visual\\_Aids\\_in\\_Language\\_Education](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326652939_Visual_Aids_in_Language_Education)



Many researchers believe that visuals help the learners to comprehend the learning material easily. They can easily memorize the mental image of a particular situation and later recall it.

Language teachers prefer using different teaching aids to make the teaching-learning process interesting and resourceful. They can make use of fine equipment to use those teaching aids in the classroom. The effectiveness of this equipment usage mostly depends on the teacher's creativity, motivation, technical knowledge and the learners' reaction towards these aids. Such activities referring to receptive and productive skills (listening and speaking) mostly require the usage of audio-visual materials.

We have chosen several formats of online visuals for our research: worksheets, infographics, mind maps and crosswords.


### **Worksheets**

The term "worksheet" can be defined as a sheet of paper on which one performs some work. Usually they are limited to two pages which form a single sheet. Most common types of worksheets are: students' school exercise assignments, exam papers, tax forms. etc. We have huge opportunities to create worksheets online then have them printed on a paper sheet. Simple examples of worksheets are those which students use during school classes, for example, questions referring to the lesson. Being individual activities, worksheets are necessary for both parents and students, as they are easily accessible; parents can track their child's routine at school, assignments, marks, as for students, they can use them as summaries of the knowledge gained. From teachers' perspective worksheets are important for understanding their students' knowledge, their progress and general and specific outcomes of the teaching-learning process.

Worksheets are created and used for all subjects/courses. English teachers use them in order to practice recently learned or explained topic. They can either take ready-made worksheets or create themselves using various worksheet-creating websites. Typical English worksheets should contain one topic, have beautiful design, be enjoyable to complete, not be time consuming.

### **Infographics**

The term "infographics" is a combination of the words "info" and "graphics". It is a special tool used in order to enhance comprehension and attract people. Being used by people of various professions, infographics are



beneficial. For example, professionals in the field of trade use them to make their products visible and competitive. As for the teachers, this tool is used in order to explain difficult lessons, give information in an attractive way to make it easier for comprehension.

There are various types of infographics, but they generally fall into three categories each serving a definite purpose:

④ **Visualization of information** is done with the help of diagrams, charts. This is the visual representation of some data, for example, the results of a school test, researches.

④ **Design of information** is actually an important part of the information representation, as it makes the display more effective and impressive.

④ **Editorial infographics** have become a great shift in the field of publications, as the importance of visual content has risen greatly in order to engage readers.

### **Mind maps**

Mind maps are special diagrams which are used in order to organize some information presenting relationships among the parts of the whole. Generally, they are created on one concept, which is put in the middle of a blank page, and lots of related ideas are drawn, such as images, words, concepts, etc. All of the related ideas are concentrated on the central idea; they present the branches of it. The diagram looks like a spider or sun rays, that's why mind maps are sometimes called "spider diagrams" or "bursting sun diagrams".

The term "mind map" was first used by Tony Buzan, a famous psychologist and TV celebrity. Mind maps are necessary, because:

- ❖ They are a good way for brainstorming,
- ❖ Note taking process becomes easier,
- ❖ They save space and time,
- ❖ Complex concepts become easily comprehensible,
- ❖ The presentation of some information is clearer,
- ❖ The learners can find the interrelations between various concepts,
- ❖ Highlights stimulate brain work,
- ❖ Learning and memorizing is more effective.

Below is an example of a mind map created by us with the help of an online tool.<sup>2</sup>

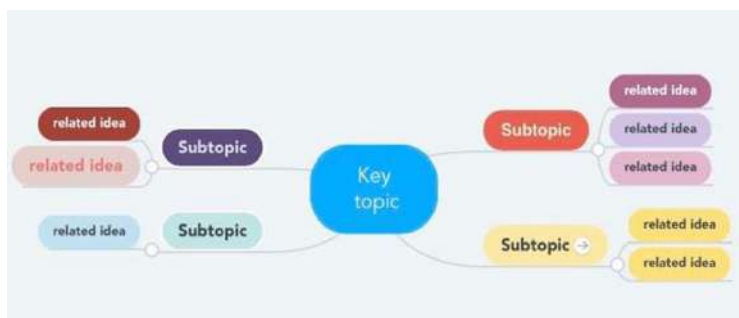


Figure 1: Structure of a mind map.

## Crosswords

A crossword, otherwise called “a crossword puzzle”, is a kind of puzzle, which is generally found in magazines, newspapers, books and the Internet. Arthur Wynne, a journalist, was the creator of the first crossword puzzle. Nowadays we can find lots of crossword examples in various magazines, newspapers.

The general or traditional type of crosswords consists of black and white squares which are known as “grids”, vertically or horizontally arranged. They should have another white square touching it from any side. The aim of these crosswords is to form various words in the white squares.

Some benefits of crosswords can be as follows:

- They enhance vocabulary, as putting different words together, people do a mental exercise improving their word stock, which plays an important role in communication.
- They have a calming effect since they can reduce the stress level. While solving crossword puzzles, people can ponder for a long while, as they make an aim of completing that puzzle. In the end, after solving it entirely, people can feel relieved.
- Stimulation for brain work. During the process of thinking over the puzzles, our brain cells keep working, thus being a good factor for creative and critical thinking.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://miro.com/app/board/>

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➤ Improving spelling skills. Puzzles are good means for checking students' spelling skills, because they can't be successful, if they fill in the grids incorrectly.

## RESEARCH

Participants of the research were students of Gavar school N2 after Papin Ghandilyan (13 learners of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, 11 learners of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 7 learners of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade). The necessary data for the research were collected by using computers, surveys, created with the help of software programs, interviews in order to clarify the efficiency of worksheets, infographics, crosswords and mind maps used during EFL teaching-learning process in the Armenian setting.

During the research and teaching sessions the following tools were used to create and implement online visuals:

- ✚ Microsoft Word,
- ✚ Crossword maker<sup>3</sup>
- ✚ Worksheet maker<sup>4</sup>
- ✚ Infographic maker<sup>5</sup>
- ✚ Mind map maker <sup>6</sup>.

During the research, qualitative and quantitative methods were used.

**For the qualitative portion,** a conversation-interview with the learners to check their awareness of modern technological means while learning English was practiced. The learners were asked 2 questions: *“Has your English teacher ever used computers at school while explaining a new lesson?”* (Yes, they have), *“Do you use them substantively when you want to learn the lesson you haven't understood?”* (Yes, we do, No, we don't, Sometimes).

**For the quantitative portion,** worksheets created with the help of Microsoft Word and Krita application were used. The aim of these worksheets was to check whether the students are visual learners or not and how they liked the use of pictures and videos while learning English. This worksheet-based research was the primary research before the detailed research referring to the direct application of the visual tools. The following conclusion was drawn: most

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<sup>3</sup> <https://crosswordhobbyist.com>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.canva.com/create/worksheets>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.easel.ly>

<sup>6</sup> <https://miro.com/app/board>

of the learners were visual learners, had good memory, liked learning with images, videos, didn't have difficulties with using ICT for studying.

After the pre-teaching research, the main aim of which was to check whether the students were interested in learning with visuals, it was decided to conduct lessons with the help of Mind Maps, Infographics, Worksheets and Crosswords. It took us long hours to create the above mentioned visuals with online tools, because we preferred self-created visuals rather than ready-made ones.

With the help of <https://www.canva.com/create/infographics/> an infographic about the modal verbs "Shall/Should" was created. This website requires registration. You have to choose "open a new infographic design" on the first page below the description of how to make an infographic. You can select a template from "education infographic" section and start your work deleting some figures, adding and changing them.

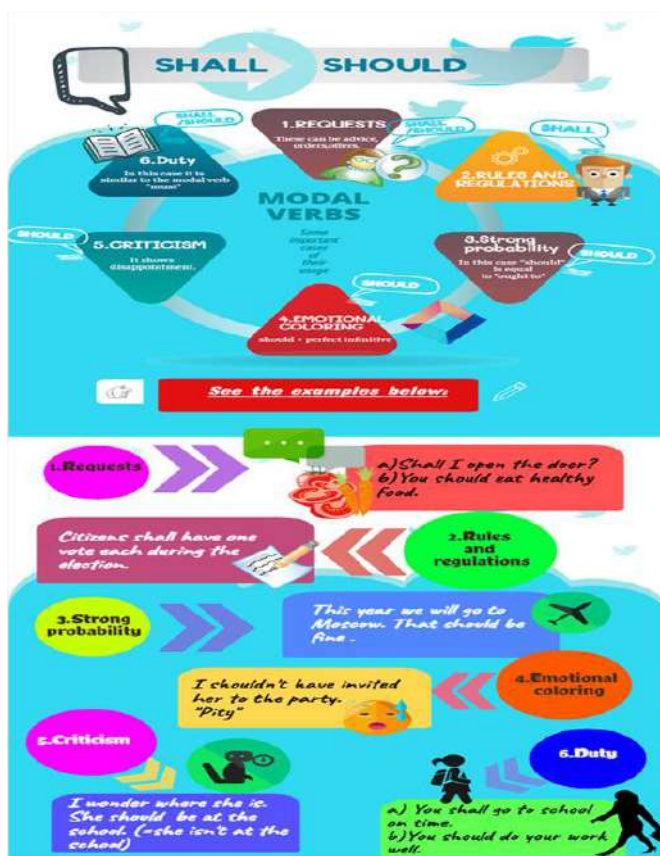


Figure 2: Infographics created with the help of CANVA.

Worksheet was created with the help of <https://www.canva.com/create/worksheets>. It was a matching exercise to practice the grammar topic.



Figure 3: Worksheet created with the help of CANVA.

With the help of [https://miro.com/app/board/o9J\\_ITRgG5g=](https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_ITRgG5g=/) a mind map on “The Present Continuous Tense”. After registration a template entitled “sitemap” from the templates section was selected. The users can choose different shapes from the shapes section, colors, can make the connecting lines bold. After filling in the shapes, you have to export that mind map in an image format.

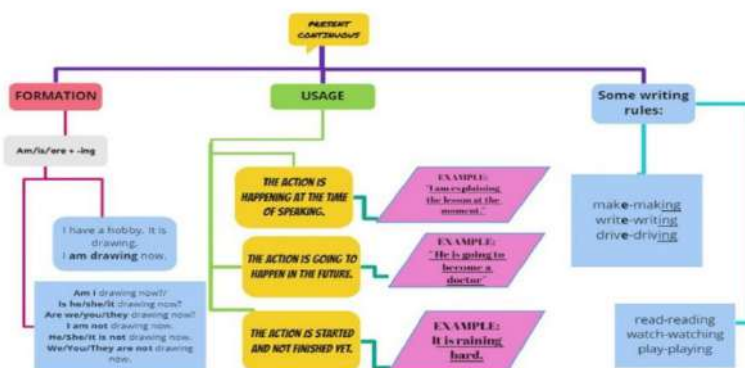


Figure 4: Mind map created with the help of MIRO.



This template was used in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade with 13 students. Their daily grammar topic was “The Present Continuous Tense”. The aim of the lesson was to enhance the students’ knowledge on the formation and usage of the tense. Firstly, the mid map was shown to the students for a short time in order to give them an opportunity to review it beforehand. As there were three subdivisions of the general grammar topic (also in the mind map), the lesson started with the “Formation” section, zooming only that part to make it extra visible and then asking the students to give their own examples. “Usage” and “Some Spelling rules” sections were explained the same way.

With the help of <https://crosswordhobbyist.com/> a crossword about school (the topic of the day was “Focus on school”) was created for the 11 students from the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. It had an option of automatically arranging the words in a crossword format. The words were typed in the blank fields and by clicking “arrange” and we got the crossword. The main objective of the lesson was to revise the words and word combinations referring to school and enhance them with the help of the crossword.

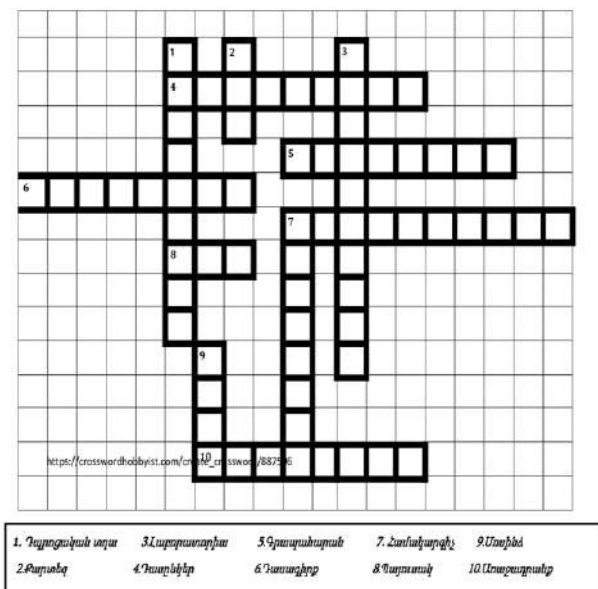



Figure 5: Crossword created with the help of crosswordhobbyist.com.



In order to receive feedback on what the learners thought about online visuals' application in class and if they liked them, a discussion was held with them after each lesson. It turned out that the learners highly appreciated the usage of tailored worksheets, infographics, mind maps and crosswords during classes, finding them more motivating, interesting and effective means compared to the traditional ones.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up the given paper, the application of online visual tools is highly effective for teaching-learning English as a foreign language. Language instructors can either create visuals by themselves (as we did) or take ready-made visuals to explain difficult topics, at the same time increasing the students' motivation, interest, creativity and productive skills. There is a plethora of various online tools aimed at creating online visuals, just a few of them have been presented in the given paper. Based on our own experience, we can claim that creating tailored online visuals and using them in teaching sessions is beneficial for both teachers and learners making teaching-learning more efficient and enjoyable.

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[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326652939\\_Visual\\_Aids\\_in\\_Language\\_Education](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326652939_Visual_Aids_in_Language_Education)
2. <https://miro.com/app/board/>
3. <https://crosswordhobbyist.com>
4. <https://www.canva.com/create/worksheets>
5. <https://www.easel.ly>

**ԱՌՑԱՆՑ ՎԻԶՈՒԱԼ ՊԱՏԿԵՐՆԵՐԻ ՍՏԵՂԾՈՒՄԸ ԵՎ ԴՐԱՆՑ ԿԻՐԱՌՈՒՄԸ  
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Սույն հոդվածը նվիրված է ՀՀ դպրոցներում անգլերենի դասերին առցանց միջոցների և պատկերների կիրառմանը: Առցանց վիզուալ /տեսողական/ միջոցները հետաքրքիր, ստեղծագործ, կոնտեքստը դյուրին դարձնող գործիքներ են, որոնց ստեղծումն ու կիրառումը օգնում է սովորողներին և ուսուցիչներին ավելի արդյունավետ դարձնել ուսումնական գործընթացը: Գոյություն ունի առցանց վիզուալ միջոցների մեծ բազմազանություն, սույն հոդվածում ներկայացված են մի քանիսը՝ աշխատանքային թերթեր, տեղեկապատկերներ /ինֆոգրաֆիկա/, մենթալ քարտեզներ, խաչքառեր: Հետազոտության հիմնական նպատակն է վերլուծել առցանց վիզուալ միջոցների դիդակտիկ ներուժը հայկական միջավայրում անգլերեն դասավանդելիս աշխատանքային թերթեր, տեղեկապատկերներ /ինֆոգրաֆիկա/, մենթալ քարտեզներ, խաչքառեր կիրառելու միջոցով: Լեզու դասավանդողները կարող են կա՛մ ինքնուրույն ստեղծել առցանց վիզուալ միջոցներ, կա՛մ կիրառել պատրաստի նյութեր բարդ թեմաները բացատրելիս՝ միևնույն ժամանակ խթանելով սովորողների մոտիվացիան, հետաքրքրությունը, ստեղծագործ միտքը և հմտությունները: Հենվելով մեր սեփական փորձի վրա՝ կարելի է պնդել, որ առցանց միջոցների նպատակային ստեղծումը և դրանց օգտագործումը լսարանում օգտակար է և՛ ուսուցիչների, և՛ ուսումնառողների համար, քանի որ դարձնում է ուսումնական գործընթացը ավելի հաճելի և արդյունավետ:

***Բանալի բառեր՝ առցանց վիզուալ /տեսողական/ պատկերներ, առցանց վիզուալ պատկերների ստեղծում, առցանց վիզուալ պատկերների կիրառում, անգլերենը որպես օտար լեզու, աշխատանքային թերթեր, տեղեկապատկեր /ինֆոգրաֆիկա/, մտաքարտեր, խաչքառ:***

## СОЗДАНИЕ ВИЗУАЛЬНЫХ СРЕДСТВ В ФОРМАТЕ ОНЛАЙН И ИХ ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ НА УРОКЕ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

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Данная статья посвящена использованию визуальных онлайн материалов в процессе преподавания английского как иностранного в школах Армении. Визуальные материалы в формате онлайн являются интересными, креативными инструментами, облегчающими понимание контекста. Их использование способствует повышению уровня эффективности учебного процесса как для учащихся, так и для преподавателей. Есть огромное множество инструментов для создания визуальных материалов в формате онлайн, и только некоторые из них представлены в данной статье: рабочие листы, инфографика, ментальные карты и кроссворды. Основная цель данного исследования – проверить дидактический потенциал визуальных онлайн средств путем использования рабочих листов, инфографики, ментальных карт и кроссвордов в процессе обучения английскому языку в армянской аудитории. Преподаватели языков могут либо создавать визуальные средства обучения самостоятельно, как в нашем случае, либо использовать готовые дидактические материалы, чтобы объяснять сложные темы, в то же время повышая уровень мотивации учащихся, поддерживая интерес, креативность и развивая продуктивные виды речевой деятельности. С опорой на наш опыт обучения, можно смело утверждать, что создание визуальных средств для конкретной цели и конкретной аудитории и использование последних в ходе урока является весьма эффективным как для преподавателей, так и для учащихся, что в конечном счете делает учебный процесс результативным и приятным.

**Ключевые слова:** *визуальные средства в формате онлайн, создание визуальных средств, использование визуальных средств, английский как иностранный, рабочие листы, инфографика, ментальные карты, кроссворды.*

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