Introduction

Historical Review: Armenian is an ancient language representing a rich and diverse culture that has evolved continually through pagan, Christian, Soviet, and modern times, has spread throughout the world with numerous Diasporas, and now is rooted in the Republic of Armenia on the northeastern tiny fraction of historic Armenia. The Armenian language (հայերեն) forms a separate branch in the Indo-European language family; it has gone through some five millennia of autonomous development and therefore, the study of Grabar, the written version of Old Armenian is significant for linguistic and philological research, along with other classical languages (Greek, Latin, Sanskrit etc.). The written history of Armenian dates back to c. A.D. 405, when the Golden Age (Գործարար) of Armenian literature began with the invention of the Armenian alphabet. The alphabet is used to this day; after its creator, St. Mesrob Mashtots, it is called the Mesropian alphabet (Մեսրոբյան այբ). The language of this era would later be called Classical Armenian (կարճարար) and its written version, Grabar. Grabar² is a dead language, though still used for religious rites in the Armenian Apostolic Church. Its timeless value derives from the rich and beautiful literature created in it. At the dawn of the Armenian literature, also numerous translations were made from dominant languages of the era—Greek, Latin, Hebrew, etc. Some of these translations into Grabar are of unique value because their historical originals didn’t survive to reach our times.

During fifteen centuries of written history, Armenian went through three main periods:
1. A.D. 5th-11th cc: Old Armenian and its written literary variety, Grabar (գրաբար), used as a literary language until mid-19th century;
2. 12th-16th cc: Middle Armenian (միջին հայերեն);
3. 17th c. to modern times: New Armenian (նոր հայերեն).

In the 1860s, two literary standards became clearly differentiated and are referred to as Western Armenian (հայերեն) and Eastern Armenian (հայերեն). In the early 20th c., Hrach’ey Acharean (1876–1953), an eminent linguist, recorded about forty geographical dialects.³ All these varieties—with definite differences—come together as the Armenian language, with common basic features in phonology, vocabulary, and grammar. More importantly, they merge as the language of the Armenian literature, and they frame the background of the Armenian culture, from philosophy and art to everyday life.

² Grabar is a transliteration of the Old Armenian qrupum. The WA pronunciation is [krapar] and the EA, [grapar]. A more detailed classification of the written Armenian differentiates the Classical Armenian of the 5th c. from the post-Classical period, 6th-11th cc.
³ Acharean’s A Dictionary of Armenian Dialects (1913) was the first in-depth linguistic study of the geographical varieties of Armenian. The dialects were dispersed and many of them were extinguished because of the 1915 Genocide of Armenians. For a reliable treatment of the subject of the Armenian genocide, see, for example: Vahakn N. Dadrian, The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus. (Providence, R.I.: Berghahn Books, 2004).
**Structural Review:** Modern Armenian language, with its two standards, Western and Eastern Armenian (WA and EA), is an agglutinating language morphologically—that is, it relies on affixation, mainly word endings, for the expression of grammatical meanings. The word order is predominantly SOV (subject object verb). Nouns and pronouns decline (six cases in WA, and seven, in EA), differentiate singular and plural and assume definite and possessive articles in the following sequence: noun + plural + case ending + article (the indefinite article in WA follows the modified, and in EA, precedes it). There is no grammatical gender in Armenian. Animate objects are differentiated in EA in accusative case. Participles, adjectives, numerals, and some prepositions create substantive forms assuming nominal endings. The verb has a wide system of conjugation and participles; it differentiates the grammatical categories of mood, tense, number, person, and aspect. Each verb may have around 140 (WA) 160 (EA) forms. The alphabet, as mentioned above, is idiosyncratic to Armenian; it contains 38 characters and two digraphs: ًَ and ُُ in EA writing tradition, ًَ in WA.\footnote{Both digraphs function since Grabar; ًَ represents the simple vowel [u], and ُُ—the abbreviated conjunction ل...and; details see in Lesson 11 and EA parallels 2 and 11.} The six Armenian vowels are written with eight characters; the thirty consonants in EA receive a phonetic representation (practically the same as in Grabar), and WA has maintained twenty-five consonants written with the same thirty characters.

**Spelling:** Modern Armenian employs two spelling systems: classical and reformed orthography. Classical orthography (CO) follows the spelling tradition established in the 5th c. The new or reformed orthography (RO) was regularized in Soviet times and used exclusively in Soviet Armenia. Until recently, all publications in Armenia were in RO, and in Diaspora, in CO.

The large wave of emigration after the collapse of the Soviet Union carried out RO into Diasporas. On the other hand, the movement toward shuffling away the Soviet residue and returning to roots brought about a tendency to revive CO in Armenia which is not an easy task particularly for economic reasons. Only a few publishing houses publish some books in CO.

In the midst of these changes, a debate about orthography arose complicated with the layman belief that CO pertains to WA, whereas RO, to EA; a belief nurtured by the rule of majority. People believe what they see: the majority of publications, especially textbooks and mass media in Diaspora appears in WA and in CO. On the other hand, the majority of publications in Armenia is in EA and RO. Orthography in general is arbitrary; historically, it is a rather new social convention serving to ease the written communication (see also Lesson 1, p. 8). As the living speech, particularly pronunciation always changes nations favor their old orthography to reduce the gap between generations. The use of CO or RO in Armenian writing is defined by location and socio-political circumstances; it has nothing to do with the inherent linguistic properties of WA or EA. Classics of WA literature are published in RO in Armenia, and classics of EA literature are published in CO in Beirut, the modern cultural center of WA, and in other older Diasporas. The Iranian Armenian community speaks EA and uses CO (though a few organizations favor RO).

As a linguist, I prefer CO which better manifests the internal form of Armenian. In this textbook, the use of CO and RO is defined by their “place”: exclusively CO is employed in WA lessons, toward EA comparisons as well, and respectively, exclusively RO is employed in EA lessons including the comparisons with WA. Only Grabar, mainly in footnotes, is spared from RO and the vocabulary differences, the last section in EA lessons, is presented in CO and RO. This consistent alienation of CO and RO from the two modern Armenian standards will assist students to separate spelling conventions from the linguistic properties of EA and WA. After all, spelling is like a shirt over the language that has been worn for such a long time that it feels like its skin.

**Reasons for Studying Armenian:** People study Armenian for three principal reasons: family, research, and business. Often these are interconnected. Many people study Armenian because they
have Armenian origins. This is especially true in the American Armenian Diaspora, where some families are gradually losing their heritage language and wish to take steps to recover it and preserve the family tradition.

People study Armenian also for research and business development. Armenia is a country with a rich and ancient culture and civilization, a country often called an open museum beneath the skies. Its history and cultural evolution attract researchers, not only for Armenian studies, but also for the study of neighboring and vanished cultures and civilizations, as Armenia and the Armenian language hold significant clues for them. A historical or modern study of Asia Minor, the Near and Middle East, or the Caucasus inevitably requires Armenian studies. With the fall of the Soviet empire, the field of Armenian studies crossed into Eastern European and post-Soviet studies. Research interest in Armenia is now accompanied by business and marketing interests. Armenia was one of the technologically better developed areas of the Soviet Union, with a mostly urban population engaged in industry, with rich natural resources and an enviable geographical position at the intersection of the Old World's great roads.

As a consequence of the failure of the Soviet system, Armenia has suffered economically and sociopolitically. In addition, natural disaster struck with a devastating earthquake in 1988. The situation was complicated by the war between Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh, a part of historic Armenia populated by Armenians and trying to rejoin Armenia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, again mainly due to its geographical position, Armenia became isolated from the world, shrinking from natural, social, and economic cataclysm, war, resulting with an outpouring of refugees, and job and home loss problems echoing in each life as personal tragedies. These problems brought forward yet another group of outside interest to Armenia: international nonprofit organizations.

Hence, scholarly research, business development and investment, tourism, and charitable activities together began to open Armenia to the world anew. Many newcomers obtained some knowledge of Armenian before arriving. The choice as a rule was WA, though the official language of the Republic of Armenia is EA. Why is WA preferable?

**Western Armenian vs. Eastern Armenian:** EA is spoken in the Republic of Armenia and the Iranian and former-Soviet Diasporas. WA, the language of WA lands lost to Turkey after the events of early 20th c., is spoken in all major Diasporas in Europe, Middle East, and Americas. WA and EA are about as different from each other as Spanish from Portuguese or Russian from Ukrainian. A proficient speaker of one version can easily pick up the other with some exposure to it in natural language settings, that is, in the speaking community. Thus a WA speaker, after a week or two in Armenia, understands EA. But it is harder to find only WA–speaking communities. There is no piece of land to locate WA and no statehood to support it. Its speakers are dispersed throughout the world and evolve in the sphere of different dominant languages. The modern Armenian Diaspora, both speaking WA and EA, triples the number of its homeland population. Practically anywhere in the world one can encounter Armenians, and they either speak WA or, as a rule, understand it thanks to a passive exposure, particularly if they have been in Armenia:

1. The WA literature in the original is a requisite in the school curricula in Armenia, as part of Armenian literature.
2. The general population is quite well-read; reading is still culturally honored.
3. There are movies, shows, and theatrical performances in WA.
4. Numerous caravans of WA-speaking repatriates brought with them the living throb of the language into the everyday life of Armenia beginning from 1946.
5. Since the 1960s, live cultural ties between Armenia and Diaspora writers, artists, musicians, etc. brought more exposure.
6. After the 1991 independence, a larger influx of Diaspora representatives obtained access to enter the Republic of Armenia for charity and politics, business, and tourism.
7. Most importantly, Armenia has pockets of WA dialects in the city of Giumri (branched from the Karin dialect), the second largest city in Armenia with an original culture of its own, and

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5 Karabakh, historical Armenian Artsakh was attached to Azerbaijan by the Bolshevik government in 1922.
6 Therefore, I encourage you to read both WA and EA lessons to acquire a deeper understanding of the version of your focus and interest, even if it is beyond your purpose to acquire fluency in both.
also in historical Javak, now the Axalsix region in southern Georgia. These enclaves of WA dialects were established in the 19th c. by immigrants from Western Armenia. Thus, speakers of EA grow up with exposure and a passive knowledge of WA. The opposite is not true; most Diaspora speakers of WA are isolated from EA and often have difficulty comprehending it.

Consequently, if one speaks WA, almost every Armenian speaker will understand him, but not vice versa. This situation illustrates a commonly known linguistic principle: the more proficient is a speaker in his or her language, the better are their chances of understanding any variety of that language.

Problems that Can Arise for English Speakers Studying Armenian: There are no easy or hard languages linguistically speaking. For beginning students, a new language feels easier if it resembles their native tongue and if the base culture is convergent with their own. For an English speaking beginner, there is neither language similarity, not cultural familiarity. The Armenian culture hardly ever shows up in the American mass media or in everyday life unless one lives in Glendale, California, or some other city with a large Armenian community. In addition, every culture is a blend of multiple sub- and micro-cultures complementing each other as in a jigsaw puzzle. The Armenian culture, though bound by common features, diverges in time and space as historic, classical, and modern, pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet, and by each Diaspora: Bolis (Istanbul), Jerusalem, Syria, Lebanon, France, Brazil, Argentina, and the United States, differing from one another further on the East and West Coast of US, and even within large cities; for example, the Armenian communities in Pasadena, Glendale, and Hollywood with its “Little Armenia” neighborhood, to list just a few in Los Angeles, are quite different from each other. In this diversity, the English-speaking beginner will find a Western civilization based culture with prevalent Greek and Roman influences since Christianity officially entered Armenia in the early fourth century; tradition says A.D. 301.

More important is the linguistic familiarity. Armenian and English are of Indo-European origin; that is, thousands of years ago the ancestors of modern Armenian and modern English speakers shared a common language. However, language change through time has isolated Armenian from the rest of related languages. Below are the numbers one to ten in several Indo-European languages. The untrained eye can notice matches between English, German, French, Spanish, and also Russian (if you know the characters), which are helpful in the language acquisition process. A linguist identifies the clear parallels with the Armenian numbers and other cognate words, and perhaps in time you may begin to develop an eye for them too.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Armenian</th>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>պուտ</td>
<td>[meg]</td>
<td>one</td>
<td>ein</td>
<td>un</td>
<td>uno</td>
<td>один</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>տեղ</td>
<td>[mek]</td>
<td>two</td>
<td>zwei</td>
<td>deux</td>
<td>dos</td>
<td>два</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>տեղ</td>
<td>[yergu]</td>
<td>three</td>
<td>drei</td>
<td>trois</td>
<td>tres</td>
<td>три</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>տեղ</td>
<td>[erku]</td>
<td>four</td>
<td>vier</td>
<td>quatre</td>
<td>cuatro</td>
<td>четыре</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>երեկ</td>
<td>[yerek]</td>
<td>five</td>
<td>fünf</td>
<td>fünf</td>
<td>cinco</td>
<td>пять</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>հենց</td>
<td>[hink]</td>
<td>six</td>
<td>sechs</td>
<td>six</td>
<td>seis</td>
<td>шесть</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 It is interesting to note that villages immediately adjacent to Giumri speak EA dialects.

8 In his History of Armenian Language, Hrachia Acharean observes that Western Armenians, as a speech community had a better understanding of Eastern Armenian but not vice versa because the speakers of WA in general were better educated in Armenian. This was in the beginning of the 20th century. By the turn of our century, the situation has reversed.
This chart also clearly reveals the first difficulty awaiting the English-speaking student: the alphabet. For languages using the Latin-based alphabet the student has to learn somewhat different values and/or additional signs for the characters s/he has been using since childhood. Not so with Armenian. Yet the Armenian alphabet has an indispensable advantage: it is phonetic—pronounced as written, each character corresponding to one sound, with some exceptions. WA has gone through a systematic consonant shift (see Appendix 4), not a rare phenomenon in the history of languages, cf.: the Great Vowel Shift in English, or High German Consonant Shift. As a consequence of this shift, five sounds (phonemes) in WA are spelled each with two letters: e.g., for [p] ꞿ and ʬ; for [k] Ɜ and ꞩ, etc. These letter pairs represent distinct sounds (voiced and voiceless) in Old Armenian and still do in EA. However, compared with English spelling—e.g., the sound [k] in care, keep, quick, exercise, choir, etc.—Armenian spelling is rather easy. Unlike the spelling, the WA pronunciation has a great advantage for beginners due to the same consonant shift; the voiceless stops and affricates of Old Armenian preserved in EA (ա, օ, ը, ձ, ծ) are foreign to English.

Armenian and English are quite different in their grammatical structure. English is an analytical language relying heavily on word order for the expression of grammatical meaning and subsequently with fewer grammatical forms per word than the majority of Indo-European languages. Grammatically WA and EA are quite similar; they are agglutinating languages (like French or Spanish) using affixation—mostly ending addition—in order to connect words in sentences. The Armenian word order is quite flexible due to noun declension and verb conjugation which are as difficult for an English-speaking beginner, as they would be for the student of Spanish, Italian, French, German, or Russian, etc. But fortunately for you, Armenian, unlike these languages and like English, does not differentiate grammatical gender. Thus the alleged difficulty of Armenian in comparison with more familiar languages boils down to a different alphabet, and also some sounds and sound combinations foreign to English.

The Structure of the Textbook and a Guide to its Use

The Structure of the Textbook: This manual is designed to meet all practical needs of beginning and heritage students in one convenient volume which can be used both in classroom and self-instruction settings. The textbook is also useful for fluent speakers of any variety of Armenian interested in the comparison of the two literary standards of modern Armenian. It contains:

◊ Phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary with illustrations;
◊ Usage of phonetics and grammar through texts and dialogues;
◊ Exercises for practice and Keys to check them.
◊ Original readings from Armenian literature (poems and fables) and folklore (proverbs).
◊ Appendices on phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary.

The main principle underlying the lessons is to learn the language by following the content and simultaneously acquire literacy. The alphabet is introduced gradually in descending frequency...
of letter use because letter frequency does not coincide with alphabetical order. Everything presented in a lesson can be spelled with the letters students already learned. With the system followed here, a student having learned less than one-third of the Armenian alphabet is able to read, write, create speech, and engage in meaningful communication; that is, apply the primary directive for a language: comprehend and produce speech.

Lessons: The textbook consists of 15 Lesson-chapters. Each chapter contains a lesson for WA and an EA parallel. EA lessons are quite brief: they compare and contrast the same material within the same structure. The WA lessons contain pictures, illustrations and offer phonetic, lexical, and grammatical exercises for practice; EA lessons end with brief assignments for advanced students. I recommend that students read both WA and EA lessons for a complete and deeper understanding of the Armenian language in its modern state. However, to avoid confusion, complete beginners should focus on one of them and simply acknowledge the other. Depending on your own curiosity level, you can obtain a historical review on the origin of common and different language trends in WA and EA, comparisons with their Old Armenian source, and also observe subtle differences in pragmatic use between WA and EA. You can skip these parts if you are interested only in the practical language use.

◊ Lessons 1–5 present a beginner’s course with more visual materials.
◊ Lessons 6–10 present an intermediate course with more grammar.
◊ Lessons 10–15 present an advanced course with in-depth grammar and extended vocabulary.
◊ The alphabet is introduced through Lessons 1-12 in descending frequency.
◊ The first 15 most frequent letters are introduced in Lessons 1 - 2 and reviewed in Lesson 3.
◊ Each following Lesson presents four new letters with reviews in Lessons 6 and 9.
◊ Lesson 3 reviews the vowels and Lesson 13 concludes the phonetics with a summary on the consonant system and diphthongs.

Thus the axis of this textbook is the alphabet in descending frequency. It has no chapter on nouns or verbs; instead, you will learn something new about each part of speech in almost every chapter. Grammar is introduced in the natural order of language acquisition, in speech forms. The frequency of usage guides the progression in grammar—that is, the rules and forms most commonly utilized in speech and first acquired by children are presented first. Living speech units are chosen to illustrate grammar and phonetics, and visual aids, pictures, and tables are used for words and concepts. To systematize the grammar introduced in this natural way, grammatical tables for declension, conjugation, and regular and irregular forms are summarized in Appendices 7-9.

Appendices: Fifteen appendices present the big picture on the structure of Armenian—phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, and use—for your review and references. The book concludes with Keys to exercises. Selected poems and fables are presented in Appendix 10. Once the student has mastered the lessons, he or she will be able to read and enjoy poems in the original. Three glossaries complete the textbook:

◊ The Armenian-English Glossary contains the words used in the textbook in alphabetical order. Armenian words are dissected into word-building components; meaning and usage differences between EA and WA are specified, as well as CO and RO spelling differences.
◊ The Glossary of Proper Names contains geographical, human, and some other proper names.

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9 Most textbooks of Armenian are structured after the textbooks of major European languages with a Latin alphabet. That would require the student to drill the alphabet before beginning the language learning.
◊ The Orthographic glossary contains spelling rules and exceptions both in classical orthography (5th c. till date) and reformed orthography (Soviet period till date).

Structure of Lesson-Chapters: The content of each chapter is presented on the first page of the WA lesson; it is not repeated in EA. Lessons consists of eight parts; the new language material is presented in the first four parts. The data in lessons are distributed in the following order and you have a choice on what to focus.

1. Phonetics  
2. Vocabulary  
2.2 Text and/or dialogue, poem.  
2.3 Explanations to texts and dialogues  
2.4 Proverbs you can read and write.  
3. Grammar  
3.2 Rules  
4. Assignments, exercises

1. Phonetics: In this section, the new letters are introduced with their pronunciation, spelling rules, and key words. Diphthongs (complex sounds consisting of two vowels or a vowel and a glide) and sound changes associated with these letters, if any, follow them. For pronunciation I use transcription, compare the sounds with English, and, in rare cases of necessity, with similar sounds from other languages. The phonemic and historic information in this section is for your general cognition and not necessary for speaking skills. Whenever possible, the pronunciation and spelling are associated with key-words in pictures and with grammatical phenomena. The section concludes with phonetic drills. Do them for reading and pronunciation fluency without trying to memorize word meanings. In drill charts, translations are provided because it is daunting to read something without understanding it but understanding does not always result in knowing. Words are truly acquired in meaningful contexts—in use—which follows in your dialogues and texts. For reading fluency, proceed with writing exercises, even if you do not think you will write in Armenian; eyes and hands have their own sensory memory and they help to reinforce speech skills.

1.1 Transcription: For uniformity purposes, I adopted the system used in JSAS (The Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies). Transcription is applied quite sparingly: when a letter is newly introduced, in pronunciation notes, when there is a difference between pronunciation and spelling, and, in the beginning lessons, with key words and picture captions. No transcription corresponds to the real sounds or reproduces them accurately; so, try to listen to native speaker talk for a true grasp on the Armenian sounds and intonation. Also, transcription into the familiar characters of the Latin alphabet makes students dependent on them, retarding the fluency in reading skills. Permanent transcription becomes a serious obstacle for learning Armenian: students who

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10 In speech—which is the ultimate goal of language students—all levels of language (sounds, words, grammar and pragmatics) are synthesized into a whole; a language is acquired when this synthesis occurs in one’s mind. In the process of language learning a level-by-level analysis is applied.

11 The Armenian transcription (symbolic representation of speech sounds) and transliteration (symbolic representation of written characters) is so variegated that every textbook or study creates its own system to say nothing about hundreds of websites with innovative approaches sprouting on the internet every day. I would prefer the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet see at: [http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/IPA/fullchart.html](http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/IPA/fullchart.html)) but it is not practical for beginning students.

12 “The transliteration system for Armenian used in JSAS is a scheme adapted from for desktop publishing from the Library of Congress’s Cataloging Services, Bulletin 121, Spring 1977.” JSAS
learn the language from transcribed textbooks may never acquire proficiency in reading, and without reading, a major part of language will remain unknown.

1.2 Fonts: Font differences seem to represent different letters for untrained eyes. Hence, throughout the textbook different Armenian fonts are used to assist students to internalize permissible variations in their shapes, that is, to recognize the same letters in slightly different forms, and grasp the essential features of characters. Different fonts, often in the same paragraph, may seem to disturb esthetic harmony but they accomplish an instructional goal.\(^1\)

Another difficulty is the upper case; used less, it takes more time to memorize. Therefore, upper case letters are repeated with the lower case even if it seems irrelevant. One of the exercises in phonetic assignments requires writing the lower case words in upper case and vice versa. It is a good practice for developing visual and kinetic memory for written language; if you are into making flash cards, write your words both in upper and lower case. This practice will help you not to skip the first letter in every other reading. In general, I recommend doing the phonetic exercises after you are done with this section.\(^1\)

2. Vocabulary: This section consists of four parts. 2.1 In the first part, following the phonetics section, vocabulary is introduced in paradigms—word-building and derivation, productive affixes, and also thematic groups of words, synonyms and antonyms. As letters represent real sounds, words represent real world objects, qualities, relations, etc. And just as sounds differ from language to language, so do the words. Even the simplest everyday words may differ in meaning and usage.\(^1\) That is, the words of languages are not labels to be hung on different objects and replaced with other labels when learning a new language. These specifics of languages require learning new vocabulary in usage. The textbook encourages students to connect the words with images and to sense their meaning in a natural speech environment.

2.2 In second part, pragmatic vocabulary is introduced—in the texts and dialogues created with the letters you have learned. The main principle underlying the texts and dialogues (and language samples in other sections) is to make the reading interesting, combine usefulness with fun. Several characters are connected through a story line and reappear in different contexts, cementing phonetics and grammar to vocabulary, and one lesson to another. The characters represent three generations of Diaspora Armenians: Ardavazd-Ardag and Nareh are children growing up in the American-Armenian Diaspora, they are neighbors with Aram, a young businessman who meets the love of his life, Hasmig through his newlywed friends, Ani and Ara; you will meet also Mrs. Nvart, Ani’s mother who immigrated from Bolis, and Hasmig’s mother from Greece. Episodic aunts and uncles and Aris the cat conclude the picture of a big Armenian family. These characters introduce the Armenian culture in through everyday topics, such as the self, family, school, work, colors, time, etc. The texts and dialogues also provide material for classroom discussion, improvisation, and skits. They reinforce the theoretical sections of the current and previous lessons and sometimes introduce new forms to be explained in the following lessons.

2.3 Explanations to Texts and Dialogues present the texts in a table format with almost every sentence translated in the middle column and explained in the third. Explanations include analysis of grammatical forms and specific speech constructions and often offer literal meanings. For reference you also have glossaries in Appendices 11-12. Use these explanations

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\(^1\) Current textbooks use only one font which looks nicer, but students come across unexpected problems when they try to read a newspaper or other publications in Armenian.

\(^1\) In the near future, the textbook will be supplemented with an audio recording of used language forms to provide you with the natural sound, speed, and intonation of Armenian.

\(^1\) For example, there are three existential verbs in Armenian roughly equivalent to the English “be” (եղել, են, ել) and there is one word enen for both sky and heaven; table in Armenian does not also mean a graph or chart, and the latter is called enen (from little brick since people used to write on brick tablets), etc.
while reading the text for the first time, mark words and phrases you would like to remember and use; try to understand the text and attain fluency in reading, then aim at improvisations on content.

2.4 **Proverbs** are an important part of the vocabulary as they are acquired as a whole. Speech is a creative process—from a limited number of phonemes (speech sounds), words, and grammatical rules, speakers create a practically unlimited number of sentences, the majority of which is novel. Along with this creativity, languages also contain a large number of fixed phrases—idioms, common formulaic expressions, everyday staple turns of speech, sayings, axioms, proverbs, etc. which have a meaning of their own not deduced from the separate meanings of their components. The vocabulary and text sections, as well as grammar examples introduce many fixed phrases which used as a whole. Besides these phrases, scattered through lessons, you also have proverbs—the live cultural wisdom condensed in pithy sayings—at the end of lessons beginning from lesson 4, when you have learned a sufficient number of letters to have proverbs in writing. The best method of internalizing proverbs is to think of situations when their use would be appropriate and check your proverb-stories with your instructors, classmates and native speaker friends.

3. **Grammar:** 3.1 The grammar is presented in the descending order of natural acquisition, as mentioned above. Complex grammatical phenomena are introduced gradually, in a simple form in the first lessons, and then repeated in an in-depth analysis and full paradigm in later lessons. New grammar is at times introduced in use—in texts and dialogues; theoretical explanations follow in the next lesson(s), when you are already familiar with it. Through Lessons 1-8, the beginner grammar is thus covered: personal and possessive pronouns, the present and future tenses, some case forms and frequent irregular verbs. From Lesson 9 on, also systematic features add up: the declension paradigm for nouns, verb moods, past (aorist) stem formation and so on.

In the grammar sections first read the titles with illustrations, tables, and examples, allow them to sink in. If you are interested in theory, also read the explanations for the grammar material or return to some of them while reading the text. Once you gain some communicative competence, you can conveniently forget the grammar terms. Remember that mere knowledge of grammar in itself does not result in communicative skills, just as the knowledge of his/her native tongue does not equip a child with an explicit, conscious knowledge of grammar. However, some grammatical knowledge is essential for adult students of a second language as the inquisitive adult mind has a need to explore and understand. Close to the end of teenage rebellion, when people enter the final stages of language ego development and enculturation, they begin to question language forms and cultural norms whereas children perceive and acquire them without challenging them; their inquisitiveness evolves around the real world and not language forms. Later in life, we settle with our native language and culture and intolerance toward the inner logic of a new language grows. The adult question “why do they say it like that?”, as well as their strive to avoid errors turn into an impediment to natural language acquisition. On the other hand, adult inquisitiveness toward language inspires the development of language learning conscious strategies. To satisfy this curiosity, I have included some historic and stylistic data; try to separate the theory and history for acknowledgement, and communicative speech forms, for practice.

3.2 **Rules:** Brief rules on the new material are summarized at the end of Lessons 1-10. Use them to summarize the theoretical sections of a lesson and to assess your learning.

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16 Children move faster into a new language terrain because they remain unaware of their errors in the process of language acquisition and are totally immersed in conversation and focused on the content. Compare the following anecdote provided by one of my student-teachers. Ryan, 3-4 years old, answers “I know not” to a question the teacher asks. The teacher corrects: “I don’t know, Ryan.” to which Ryan replies: “You know not too?” There is a lesson for adult language students to be learned from Ryan: direct your focus to the content in language, seek meaningful communication and you will be successful in your language learning quest.
4. Assignments are divided into phonetic and lexical-grammatical sections. Work on them according to your personal learning strategies, either part by part, after reading each section in the lesson, or after you are done with the entire lesson. Work on the most challenging assignments and exercises and then check with the Key to Exercises. I would not recommend that you invest your time on those exercises which are too easy for you (just skip them) or those which are too difficult (work on them with a peer or instructor or with the Keys open). Doing all exercises can take up to 4-5 hours.

GENERAL TIPS FOR THE USE OF THE TEXTBOOK

In a classroom setting, each lesson should require approximately one week. An instructor may choose to divide Lessons 7-15 into a bi-weekly material; in a semester school year system, spend the first semester until Lessons 7 or 8, and the rest, in the second semester, utilizing the “reading in the original” appendix for additional texts. In a term system, five lessons per term is recommended. I try to cover the phonetics until Lesson 12 included in the first term, and return to the grammar and some texts in Lessons 8-12 in the second term. It depends on the level of language knowledge of your students.

For self-instruction, follow your natural speed but maintain regular hours. Language is both habit formation and a creative process—you don’t use it, you lose it. The textbook is designed so that you can adapt it to your level and needs: complete beginners, heritage students with diverse language interests, focus on practical speech skills or focus on literacy, reading fluency, literary standard, history, and variations of Armenian language etc.

If you are a complete beginner, start with Lesson 1, read the phonetic and grammar sections. Do not spend time on memorizing rules; instead, read the text with explanations and work on the exercises, referring back to rules if necessary. Then check yourself with Keys. After Lessons 6-7, if the grammar becomes harder, it is all right to skip some parts keeping the focus on phonetics and vocabulary with texts. The grammar acquisition and internalization will come eventually, with more reading and speaking.

If you are a heritage student, practically fluent in everyday speech and need to develop your literacy skills and literary language, acquaint yourself with each lesson and select to focus on those sections which contain new information for you or provide explanations to language phenomena you know but do not understand in depth. When working on grammar sections, first review the tables and charts, also pictures with captions. If the grammar still feels difficult, return back to it while working on the text and exercises. Focus on new words and phrases to enrich your vocabulary—make flash cards or copy them in your note-book or mind-binder, draw them, and try to use them with your friends and family. Select the strategies which work best for you.

If you are interested only in WA, still read the EA supplement, preferably section by section. There are many WA phenomena which come up only in comparison with EA.

If you are interested in EA only, still check each section in the WA lesson because the common features are not repeated in the corresponding EA sections. Also make use of pictures, phonetic drills, and lexical arrangements. Translate your texts and check them with the keys. Some other exercises at the end of the lessons can be adapted for EA too.

Language is a complex human phenomenon which involves a combination of voluntary and automatic skills in listening, understanding and speaking, reading, writing and thinking and humans acquire language not only through abstract mind but also sensory perceptions which connect the real world things with speech sounds and their meanings. Therefore, try to limit the dependence of your Armenian (or any other new language you are learning) on English (or another language you know better) by using the provisions of this textbook.

In general, maintain a creative approach to your language acquisition, for example, after having read a text or dialogue, improvise and play with it, think of a different beginning and ending, change the characters or their characteristics, allow your imagination to draw in more new words.
and new forms from your target language. Keep your focus on the content, and experiment with the form and sound. I refer to masters of language creativity; Edgar Allan Poe says: “The sound seems to echo to the sense”. Lewis Carroll also makes the point: “Take care of the sense, and the words will take care of themselves.”

Bon voyage in your journey to a new world—the Armenian language and culture.