

# Semantic and Stylistic Variations of Synonyms and Conceptually Related Terms in Syunik- Artsakh Dialect

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**Abstract**—While synonymy in standard Armenian is a well-established field, its manifestation in dialectal contexts, particularly in the historically rich Syunik-Artsakh region, remains underexplored. This study offers a comprehensive analysis of the semantic and stylistic stratification of synonyms, with a particular focus on the highly expressive conceptual domains of “lazy” and “foolish”. Integrating diachronic and synchronic methodologies, the research draws on a diverse range of sources, including Classical Armenian (Grabar) texts, dialectal data from philological studies, and original oral fieldwork. The analysis identifies a vast network of synonymous words and idioms that differ not only in form and meaning but also in pragmatic function, emotional tone, and stylistic register. It examines the key mechanisms of synonym formation, tracing the evolution of native vocabulary (e.g., the semantic shift of *anban* from ‘irrational’ to the dialectal *anpen* ‘lazy’) and the adaptation of loanwords from Persian, Turkish, Arabic, and Russian. The study highlights how metaphorical extension, often based on animal or object imagery, contributes to the expansion of these synonymic sets. Findings demonstrate that dialectal synonyms operate as a dynamic, multi-layered system where distinct word families and conceptually related terms merge into flexible semantic fields. Word choice is shown to be heavily contingent on situational context and speaker intent. The study concludes that stylistic stratification, shaped by the interplay of native linguistic development and prolonged foreign influence, is essential for understanding the functional and register-based distinctions that underpin the remarkable expressive richness of dialectal Armenian.

**Index Terms**—synonymy, stylistic stratification, semantic variation, Syunik-Artsakh dialect, lexical borrowing

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. *The Syunik-Artsakh Dialect Group: A Historical and Linguistic Overview*

The Syunik-Artsakh dialect group, also referred to in linguistic literature as the Karabakh-Shamakhi or extreme northeastern interdialectal subgroup (Kumunts, 2022a), is recognized as one of the largest and most functionally vital dialect groups within the “um” branch of the Armenian language. Historically, its territorial scope encompassed several regions within the Azerbaijan SSR of the Soviet Union—including Krzen, Havarik, Shamakhi, Gazakh-Kirovabad, and the entire Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast—as well as the Syunik region of the Armenian SSR, spanning from the early 20th century to the 1990s.

A notable structural subdivision of this dialect group is the Burdur dialect, which emerged in the 16th–17th centuries in the Burdur region of Turkey and persisted until the Armenian Genocide of 1915 (Kumunts, 2022b; Tahir, 2009). Following the forced displacement of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023, the diverse subdialects of the group (e.g., Karabakh, Hadrut, Mehtishen, Krzen, Havarik, Shamakhi, and Burdur) have nearly vanished from their native territories, surviving primarily in the Goris subdialect within the Syunik Province of the Republic of Armenia (Kumunts, 2022c).

Linguistically, the region is distinguished by archaic features preserved from the Indo-European linguistic stratum (Hovhannisyanyan, 2024; Kumunts et al., 2023; Kumunts et al., 2025) and an ancient toponymic system (Kumunts et al., 2024). The dialectal lexicon reflects prolonged contact with Old and Middle Iranian, Caucasian, and Turkic languages, alongside lexical layers documented through borrowings from Arabic and Russian.

### B. *Research Problem and Objectives: The Study of Dialectal Synonymy*

Dialectal synonymy in Armenian, particularly within the Syunik-Artsakh region, represents a linguistically rich yet understudied domain. Here, multilingual contact, historical developments, and folkloric creativity have fostered a complex network of synonymous forms and expressions. Previous studies have largely focused on synonymy in standard literary Armenian, whereas this research examines the intersection of semantic and stylistic nuances in dialectal usage.

Guided by the hypothesis that synonym clusters in this dialect group exhibit not only semantic variability but also functional-stylistic stratification—reflecting both inherited structures and externally influenced developments—the study centers on two core semantic fields: “lazy” and “foolish.” These concepts have historically generated diverse linguistic

forms through derivation, borrowing, metaphorical extension, and phonetic shifts. Such variants often serve communicative, expressive, and socio-cultural purposes that transcend their literal meanings, underscoring the dynamic nature of dialectal synonymy and its connection to the lived historical experiences of speech communities.

## II. METHODOLOGY

There are numerous methods and approaches for studying synonyms. In contemporary linguistic research, many scholars analyze the semantic characteristics of such lexical groups within the framework of corpus linguistics. In this context, Shuyi Hou presents a comparative analysis of the semantic prosody of the synonyms “effect,” “impact,” and “influence” using corpus-based methods, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to reveal differences in their usage (2023). Based on the COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English), Liu Liven explores the collocational patterns and semantic features of the word “divorce” as both a noun and a verb, highlighting its predominantly negative, and occasionally positive, connotations (2024). A similar methodology has been applied in examining the frequency, collocational tendencies, and semantic prosody of the synonyms “situation,” “environment,” and “circumstance,” using data from the COCA and WECCL corpora (Sun & Yin, 2020).

Our research findings show that corpus data and concepts do not always fully reflect the semantic groupings of synonyms or words included in the same semantic field, nor do they capture their quantitative and qualitative features. It should be noted that language is in a constant state of change, and due to the diverse forms of communication, lexical and semantic structures are evolving more rapidly, encompassing both standard language and dialects. Informal forms of synonyms and equivalent word units have led to unique manifestations of semantic prosody, which play an important role in distinguishing and correctly using synonyms.

Undoubtedly, linguistic corpora are powerful tools for studying language (Herteg, 2023). By applying them in the field of dialectology, it is possible to combine geographic, linguistic, and socio-cultural factors to understand the bases of linguistic variation (Wieling & Nerbonne, 2015). However, when using corpora, it is necessary to consider certain limitations, including unequal representation of data and analytical challenges, which sometimes hinder the full explanation of some linguistic phenomena (Hartmann, 2023). To achieve the best results, it is advisable to combine corpus data with other methodological approaches, such as field studies and qualitative analyses, which form the foundation of this research. For this study, data from the largest Armenian lexicographical corpora (Nayiri) were used based on dialectal evidence. Unfortunately, the corpus does not include all the words and concepts currently used in the living language. The “Arevak” national corpus also does not include many dialectal and colloquial words and concepts, which contain important material from a linguistic perspective.

This study is based on a multimethodological approach, aiming to reveal the mechanisms underlying the formation of semantically related concepts and the subsequent process of organizing them into synonym groups. For the sake of clarity and focus, the analysis centers on a specific dialectal region—Syunik-Artsakh—and two particular semantic fields: “lazy” and “foolish.” This framework, however, may be expanded in the future to include comparisons with other dialectal areas, as well as with languages belonging to the same linguistic family or those that have historically undergone long-term contact. Such language contact often results in mutual influence, leaving traces in vocabulary and subtle shifts in meaning.

While semantic and stylistic differentiation is frequently studied within the boundaries of the standard literary language, dialects often possess multilayered and non-standard linguistic forms that require in-depth scholarly attention. From this perspective, the present study holds relevance for those literary languages that continue to exhibit the influence of dialectal elements.

Furthermore, this research emphasizes the social dimension of lexical meaning. The semantic significance of words is shaped not only by various historical-linguistic strata—such as Classical Armenian, other dialectal branches, or contact languages—but also by phonetic variants within the same dialect, which may introduce subtle semantic nuances. The historical development of lexemes has been analyzed diachronically, drawing on sources from Classical Armenian (Grabar). Dialectal language use has traditionally evolved under the influence of the broader Armenian linguistic continuum, while Grabar has played a significant role in enriching dialectal vocabularies with new synonyms and conceptual distinctions. In this regard, Classical Armenian dictionaries, medieval manuscripts, philological and historiographical studies, oral fieldwork, and recorded data have served as essential sources for this research. The oral fieldwork component involved structured and semi-structured interviews with native speakers from the Goris region of Syunik, representing different age groups to capture generational variations in lexical use. The collected data was cross-referenced with existing dialectal dictionaries (e.g., Margaryan, 1975; Sargsyan, 2019) and the Nayiri lexicographical database to ensure accuracy and contextual relevance. Quantitative estimates, such as frequency of use or the number of idioms, were derived from a systematic analysis of this combined dataset.

## III. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### *A. Diachronic Stratification: The Semantic Evolution of Synonyms for “Lazy”*

In the Syunik-Artsakh dialect area, there is a wide range of words and expressions that share the same meaning but are used in different contexts or registers, exhibiting various stylistic features. As observed by Yezekyan, “the study of

synonyms is one of the important problems of stylistics in a broad sense” (2007, p. 198). The principle of vocabulary stratification, which identifies the shared features of word groups and their roles in verbal communication (Poghosyan, 1990), is a useful methodological tool for exploring dialectal synonymy. It allows for the identification of synonymic series formed through stylistic layering from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives (Khlghatyan, 1976; Avetisyan et al., 2016).

Using conventional methods of grouping synonyms—such as by parts of speech or degrees of synonymy (Cruse, 2004)—can result in a dictionary-like classification that overlooks the specific lexical or stylistic value of individual terms in a dialectal series. To achieve more meaningful results, this study examines the mechanisms by which word meanings are formed (Brutyán, 1998), including word formation, syntagmatic relations, and etymological and stylistic analyses. The aim is not to determine the exact quantitative weight of such groups but to reveal the forms and mechanisms of their formation.

The linguistic analysis will be conducted from two perspectives:

*Diachronic:* Focusing on the meanings of the words *indolent* (*anban*) and *lazy* (*tsuył*). This will help determine the historical period in which these synonymic groups emerged, including their commonly used, obsolete, or rarely used units.

*Synchronic:* Focusing on the meaning of *stupid*. This will reveal the current principles governing the formation of near and absolute synonymy and their stylistic generalizations.

The study of the first group’s synonymic series in a chronological context examines the semantic characteristics of lexical units within the dialectal system, using the word *lazy* as a point of departure.

#### (a). *Synonyms of Native Origin*

The word *lazy* corresponds to several synonymous words and expressions in the dialect, many of which trace back to earlier historical stages. For instance, the Old Literary Armenian (Grabar) word *tsuył* becomes the dialectal *tsül* (‘lazy, idle’). A number of similar lexical forms originate from Old Armenian vocabulary.

The Grabar word *anban*—formed from the prefix *an-* (negative) and *ban*<sup>1</sup> (‘work, activity’)—originally meant ‘irrational, beastlike.’ In the dialect, however, it has undergone semantic and phonetic shifts (Aghayan, 1984), resulting in forms like *anpän*, *anpen*, and *ampän*, which convey the meaning ‘lazy, unfit for work.’ The semantic evolution of this term proceeded along a path of meanings such as ‘inactive → idle → incapable → unproductive,’ aligning with numerous lexical items in the dialect (Bediryan, 1990). Dialectological studies and oral testimonies from the Syunik-Artsakh region reveal a rich collection of synonymous expressions that are structurally simple and often polysemous (Sargsyan, 2019; Margaryan, 1975; Sargsyan, 2015).

A particularly illustrative example is the phrase *the rain will come and water it* (*torë kika-këchiri*), used to characterize individuals who avoid work or responsibility. Similarly, the expression *kond[dë] morekh* (literally ‘dismembered locust’) describes ‘a very lazy, slow-moving person’ (Hambardzumyan, 2012; Kumunts, 2017). Figurative speech has also given rise to sayings like *a wolf when eating bread, and a weak one in work* (*hats’um kyül, penum tül*), said of those who are active when eating but lazy when working.

Other metaphorical expressions include:

- the flies have given birth to chicks on the face (*chanjerë iresin tsäk’ tal*) – ‘to be very lazy, incompetent’.
- to be weak in the back (*meshkan bosh*) – ‘1. physically weak, 2. lazy’.
- with yogurt made on his head (*këlkhin matsun merats*) – ‘lazy and slow-moving’.
- grass-snake hanging on the fence (*chëparav ingäts lok*) – ‘1. immobile, 2. lazy and numb’.

Notably, these examples do not include loanwords from modern or contemporary periods, and most of their components derive from Classical Armenian. Owing to this trait and their frequent usage, they are regarded as semantically stable combinations within the dialect, likely originating in earlier historical periods. While these combinations may exhibit phonetic or minor grammatical variations across the dialect area, their semantic core remains largely unchanged, functioning as phraseological units.

#### (b). *Later Formations and Loanwords*

This group includes words and phrases that were formed relatively late or entered the dialectal realm through contact with other languages.

The word *anban* (‘indolent’) has been combined with *amp’eshak* (‘unskilled’), one of the meanings of which is ‘lazy.’ Through assimilation (where the prefix *an-* becomes *am-*), the compound *ampen-amp’ish* emerged as an adjective for ‘indolent, lazy.’ In addition to this meaning, it also signifies ‘clumsy’ and ‘careless,’ its polysemy forming through stylistic possibilities in popular speech. Similarly, the polysemous adjective *pakas* (‘less, incomplete, deficient, bad’) has formed parallel combinations, such as *pëkësot’un anel* (‘to do stupidity’), *k’yällän pakas* (‘to have less head [brain],’ i.e., ‘stupid’), and *khelk’an pakas* (‘to have less intelligence,’ i.e., ‘deficient in intellect’). The abundance of idioms with the word for “brain” is not accidental; according to our calculations, there are approximately 162 such idioms in Armenian, a number that can triple when dialectal variants are included.

<sup>1</sup> ‘1. Word, saying, 2. thought, idea, meaning, significance. 3. thinking, judgment, intelligence, 4. message, command, order, commandment, 5. word, 6. word of God, 7. relationship, connection, interaction, order, 8. reason, reason, 9. acts as a special name for inanimate objects, phenomena, and so on, 10. language’ (Ghazaryan, 2000). The synonyms of the word thing in folk speech are: ‘1. work, work, occupation, 2. word, message, 3. thing, object, material, 4. Subject’, etc.

The compound *bedrang-bedovlat*, derived from the adjectives *bedrang* ('colorless, unattractive') and *bedovlat* ('useless, empty, lazy'), reflects semantic fields similar to *anban* and *amp'eshak*. In Persian, *bedrang* figuratively means 'unsightly,' and within the dialectal context, this compound has become conventionalized to express a range of negative attributes, including 'useless,' 'lazy,' 'empty,' and 'unsightly'.

The original meaning of the Persian loanword *avara* (also *hvara*)—'wandering'—has gradually shifted toward a pejorative connotation, now typically denoting 'idle' or 'vagrant.' This semantic shift gave rise to coordinative compound expressions in the dialect, such as *avara tārñāl* ('to be wandering and lazy') and *avara inel* ('to become useless, lazy, or vagrant'), which reinforce its extended cultural connotations.

The dialectal system has also adopted the word *t'ambāl* (from Turkish *tembel*), which is synonymous with *ampen* and semantically aligned with the aforementioned terms. While its primary meanings include 'one who avoids work, lazy, inactive,' in the Artsakh dialect, semantic intensification has extended its connotations to 'slow-moving' and 'sluggish.' In this sense, it is synonymous with *bālbāz* (from Russian *балбес*), meaning '(figuratively) a lazy, slow-moving, incompetent person,' a word that entered the dialect group at a later stage.

The synonymous group comprising *ampan*, *āmpen-amp'ish*, *bedrang*, and *t'ambal* is stylistically and semantically comparable to the compound *t'ülēbosh* (or *t'ülübosh*), formed from Armenian and Turkic components. The Armenian word *t'ül* ('weak') also carries the meaning 'lazy.' While the Turkish *boş* ('empty') does not inherently imply laziness, the semantic reinforcement from *t'ül* has given the compound *t'ülēbosh* the meanings 'lazy, idle,' alongside its primary senses of 'weak-bodied' or 'frail'.

The word *ghalb*, which entered Armenian dialects from Arabic, carries the primary meanings 'false, deceitful, envious.' In the Syunik-Artsakh dialectal region, it has also acquired the metaphorically extended sense of 'to be lazy under any pretext' or 'to act deliberately slowly.' Although relatively infrequent, this secondary usage functions synonymously with terms for "lazy," particularly conveying the nuance of 'feigned laziness' or 'laziness through deception'.

In dialects, metaphorical meanings are often formed through resemblance to objects. A case in point is the word *yabu* (from Turkish *yabu*), originally referring to a 'thin, scruffy horse that moves slowly due to exhaustion.' The ironic connotation of this original sense has been extended to describe human behavior, where women perceived as 'lazy and slow-moving' are mockingly referred to as *yabu*.

The word *yassar* (from Turkic dialects), originally meaning 'lacking willpower, weak or indecisive' (Taghiyev, 2006), has over time acquired the additional senses of 'feeble, powerless, inactive, lazy.' Used with specific pragmatic intent, this term is applied to individuals perceived as having become lazy due to physical or mental weakness. Because of this implication, *yassar* is not fully synonymous with the more general term *lazy* (*tsuył*) but instead enriches the concept's synonymic network. It is stylistically opposed to the adjective *neynar* ('lazy, slow-moving, inattentive'), which implies being 'able, but pretending to be lazy,' whereas *yassar* connotes 'laziness from weakness'.

In the Syunik-Artsakh dialectal area, the words *kyāsēbats'u* ('poor'), *kyüt* ('slow, unskilled'), and *ölü* (from Turkish *ölü*: 'dead') also operate as functional equivalents or near-synonyms for "lazy" in the broader lexical system.

The Turkish dialectal word *küt* (pronounced *k'üt*), meaning 'incapable' (cf. Turkish *küt ve kötürüm kimseler* – 'incapable and disabled individuals'), is polysemous in the Syunik-Artsakh dialect continuum. A metaphorical meaning of the word in Turkish, originally referring to 'bread made from low-quality flour,' has gained primary status in these dialects. From this metaphorical extension, an adjectival usage has emerged, generating a range of meanings: '1. unskilled, inexperienced; 2. slow-moving; 3. physically disabled; 4. lazy.' These senses are attested across nearly all dialects within the region. In its original meaning of 'dough made from poor-quality flour,' *küt* is preserved in Turkic dialects such as those of Zaqatala and Baku (Behbutov, 1999). The meaning 'lazy' may also be linked to another Turkish homonym *küt*, meaning 'short and thick,' which also appears to have entered the dialectal sphere.

The Turkic word *ölü* ('dead') is also part of this group in its figurative sense, meaning 'lazy, weak, feeble,' although this usage is now considered obsolete.

The dialectal slang expression *verēbosh*, an idiomatic expression derived from *vēr* ('butt') and *bosh* (Turkish 'empty'), exhibits an intriguing morphological and semantic composition. As an adjective, *verēbosh* historically conveyed meanings such as 'lazy, idle, unable to endure hardship,' evolving from senses like 'to loiter aimlessly' or 'to avoid work.' However, not all of these semantic nuances are actively used across the Syunik-Artsakh dialect continuum. In the dialects of Syunik (particularly Goris, Kapan, and Meghri), the term predominantly carries the meaning of 'wasteful, one who spends or uses resources senselessly.' It also appears in compound forms like *verān bosh* and *vērē bosh* ('weak-willed, with other inclinations'). The connotations of 'lazy' and 'idle' appear to be less productive in these dialectal varieties.

The word *tērēchēzhkan*, with its unique structure (likely from *tēr* and *chichi+kan*), belongs to the inactive layer of dialectal vocabulary, attested only in the Syunik villages of Togh and Kornidzor. The emergence of its meanings—'lazy and arrogant'—appears to be metaphorical. The word has thus acquired the specific semantic nuance of 'laziness resulting from arrogance'.

### (c). Recent Borrowings and Diachronic Summary

The vocabulary of the Syunik-Artsakh dialect area also includes words formed in a relatively recent period, often borrowed from other languages (Marutyan, 2000). For example, the Russian borrowing *lodēr* (from *лодырь*) means 'idle, lazy' and is synonymous with the native *ampen*. However, stylistically, *lodēr* is used with the specific nuance of 'able,

but not considering it necessary to do the job; arrogant.’ Its adjectival meaning can also evolve into a noun with an ironic tone depending on the context.

Summarizing the diachronic stratification, 83% of the 46 synonymous units for ‘lazy’ are active in the dialect area, while 17% are considered archaic or obsolete foreign words. The native words *ampän* and *ampen-ampish* are metaphorically synonymous with the Russian loanword *bälbäz* (*балабес*), which in Russian also means ‘stupid’ or ‘rude.’ In the dialect, its concrete noun meaning—‘a large and slow-moving sheep’—preceded its later metaphorical senses of ‘lazy, slow-moving,’ and ‘a useless person’.

During this more recent period, compound expressions are rarely formed; synonyms tend to be simple words. Some foreign borrowings carry situational meanings, such as the Russian loans *debil* (‘stupid’), *durak* (‘foolish’), *tupoy* (‘dull’), and *idyot* (‘idiot’) (Marutyan, 2000).

The analysis will now shift to a synchronic perspective, exploring the semantic realizations of the word *himar* (‘fool’) and its related synonym set. This lexical base is distinguished by its stylistic neutrality and high combinability, often serving as a substitute for other members of its synonymous group.

### B. Synchronic Stratification: Functional and Stylistic Variation in Synonyms for "Stupid"

This section analyzes the semantic manifestations of the base word *himar* (‘fool’) and its synonymous set within a synchronic framework. This lexical base is particularly characterized by its stylistic neutrality and broad applicability, often enabling it to replace other members of its near-synonym group in discourse.

As Jahukyan (1972) notes, dialectal synonyms reflect not only spatial variations but also functional, stylistic, and semantic differences, such as varying degrees of qualification and register. It is on this basis that dialectal synonyms can be distinguished from one another. While abundant etymological data exists for these words, it does not always yield significant results at the synchronic level, as many function within colloquial registers where their primary significance is pragmatic. The genealogical analysis of the lexicon reveals a multi-layered structure of borrowings and native terms.

From Classical Armenian:

- *Höl* – ‘fool’ (lit. ‘kid goat’), from IE *pōu-* ‘small’.
- *Ankhelk’* – ‘mindless’ (lit. ‘one without mind’), from IE *sk(h)el-* ‘intelligence’.
- *Khaz* – ‘fool, simpleton’ (lit. ‘goose’), possibly a metathetic variant of the Armenian *sag* (‘goose’) (Acharyan, 1979).

Loanwords:

- *Hambal* – ‘foolish, uneducated’ (lit. ‘porter’), from Arabic *ḥammāl*.
- *Härip’* – ‘gullible, trusting, inexperienced’ (orig. ‘companion’), from Arabic *ḥarīf*.
- *Ghamaz* – ‘stupid, dull-witted,’ likely from Arabic *ḡammāz*.
- *Shash* – ‘foolish, naive, crazy,’ possibly from Turkish *şaşı-* ‘confused.’ It forms derivatives like *Shashmishlats* – ‘stupefied<sup>2</sup>’.

Dialectal Expressions:

- *Kelkhin tsün yekats* – ‘foolish, naive’ (lit. ‘snow has fallen on the head’).
- *Kēlkhumē tset’i kat’ chinil* – ‘mindless, lacking reason’ (lit. ‘to have no drop of oil in the head’).
- *Khakhalē tsak* – ‘dim-witted, senseless’ (lit. ‘a sieve that is perforated’).
- *Anpoz kyūmash* – ‘foolish, stubborn’ (lit. ‘a buffalo without horns’).

Based on their geography of usage, these synonyms can be divided into two groups: words characteristic only of the Syunik-Artsakh dialectal area (e.g., *ats’alig-mats’alig*, *hümbät*), and words common to other Armenian dialects as well (e.g., *akhmakh*, *ankhelk*, *dmbo*, *dambla*). From a synchronic perspective, it is important to analyze the frequency and stylistic profile of these words within the dialect to understand their quantitative and functional significance.

The word *himar* (*yimar*), of Semitic origin in Classical Armenian, is represented by numerous dialectal synonyms and near-synonyms across the dialect group, which can be categorized by their frequency and usage patterns.

#### (a). Classification by Frequency and Usage

In terms of frequency, the words in the synonymic series can be categorized as follows:

##### 1. Widespread Across all Variants of the Dialect Group

An example is *akhmak* (or *akhmag*), from Arabic *aḥmaq*, meaning ‘foolish, stupid.’ It is believed to be a dialectal variation of *himar* and is the most frequently used word in this group. In declension, its initial *a* often changes to *ē*. The word is highly productive, transforming from an adjective into other parts of speech: verbs like *ēkhmēkhanel* (‘to become foolish’), adverbs like *ēkhmekhvari* (‘foolishly’), and nouns like *ēkhmēkhot’un* (‘foolishness’). Similarly, the adjective *ankhelk’* (‘mindless’) has a nominal variant *ankhelk’ot’un* (‘foolishness’).

##### 2. Characteristic of Specific Variants

<sup>2</sup> In the village of Akn (now in Turkey), a shushtik ‘surprised, dumbfounded’ is recorded (Abrahamyan, 2016).

Some terms are specific to certain subdialects, such as the Artsakh dialect's *äts'äligy-mäts'äligy* ('foolish and crazy'), a reduplicated form likely derived from *ats'ekh-p'ëts'ekh* ('proper-improper'). It is used both adjectivally and adverbially, as in *äts'äligy-mäts'äligy khoshel* ('to speak foolishly').

Words in this group are also notable for semantic reinterpretation. Certain words have acquired a common meaning through metaphorical extension from proper names (e.g., *Panos, Nazar*). In the Artsakh dialect, the name *Badi* is used to mean 'foolish, naive.' Common nouns are also used as nicknames, such as *Kyüsh* ('idiot') Santi or *Kizh* ('crazy') Daniel in Goris. These names are preserved in the lexicon as substitutes for 'fool,' and this transference of meaning also extends to the names of animals and plants. For example, the plant name *bāngi* (*Hyoscyamus*) carries the meaning 'foolish, empty-headed,' and the phrase *bāngi kerats* (lit. 'eaten *bāngi*') means 'made a fool of.' Similarly, animal names are used metaphorically: *dodos* ('toad') for 'fool'; *anpoz kyumash* (lit. 'ox without horns') for 'a foolish, incomprehensible person'; and *kodukh* ('small animal cub') for 'foolish.' The word *avanak* ('donkey') and its more common dialectal equivalent *esh* are also widely used with the figurative meaning of 'foolish'.

### 3. Expressions With Interdialectal Significance

There is also a group of synonymous expressions that occupy an intermediate position, showing both semantic consistency and lexical variation across dialectal zones. Compare: *tavari kēlokh* (lit. 'head of cattle') and *tavari ts'av* (lit. 'pain of cattle'), both meaning 'stupid, insensitive'; or *ēshan t'ērats* (lit. 'jumped off the donkey') and *ēshan ingats* (lit. 'fell off the donkey'), both meaning 'someone who does stupid things'.

Polysemous sets often emerge through metaphorical extension based on similarity in form or function (Golovin, 1973; Reformatskiy, 1967). The word *esh* ('donkey'), for instance, is used to mean 'a stupid, dull person,' and has generated numerous idioms:

- *ēshē hinch a güdüm, moshē hinch a?* (lit. 'what does the donkey know about blackberries?') – 'a fool doesn't recognize value'.
- *ēshin khēratē takēn a* (lit. 'a donkey's only advice is a beating') – 'the only way to get through to a fool is through punishment'.
- Grammatical forms also reinforce meaning, such as *ēshi kēlōkh* (lit. 'donkey's head') for 'fool.' In the Artsakh dialects, *k'ushu* ('donkey foal') has the figurative sense 'fool, ignorant'.

Other animal names are also used metaphorically. *Höl* ('kid goat') has the extended meaning of 'fool, clueless.' *Ghaz* ('goose') means 'fool, silly.' The Russian calque *hēndyushka* ('turkey') likewise carries this metaphor. Many of these words are not limited to the Syunik-Artsakh region and are widely used in colloquial speech. The word *tavar* ('livestock') can mean 'fool' or 'rude person,' forming expressions like *tavari kēlōkh* ('animal's head'). The same applies to *vēkhchar* ('sheep'), in phrases like *vēkhchari kēlōkh* ('sheep's head').

#### (b). Formation of Synonyms Through Analogy and Metaphor

In the dialectal group, numerous simple and compound synonym clusters emerge that approach the meaning of 'fool' with various functional, stylistic, or semantic nuances. Some words have developed such meanings through analogy with existing lexical templates. For example, *khak* (or *chag*), meaning 'unripe,' has acquired the metaphorical sense of 'foolish, somewhat foolish, dim-witted' by analogy with literary words like *ch'has* ('immature') and *thas* ('undeveloped').

It is difficult to determine the exact origin of these semantic parallels, especially since the word *khak* already had metaphorical connotations in Classical Armenian, such as 'unripe, inexperienced, unskilled.' It is likely that through semantic analogy with *khak*, the word *hum* ('raw') also developed the meanings 'immature, inexperienced, foolish,' even though it did not originally bear them. Similarly, compounds derived from the metaphorical use of *datark* ('empty') have also taken on the meaning 'fool.' Examples include *tertāk-mertāk khosal* (lit. 'to speak empty-empty'), meaning 'to speak foolishly,' and the reduplicated form *tertāk-mertāk* ('empty-empty') for 'foolish, senseless.' The Artsakh dialectal form *hēghēhēghe* also carries the meaning 'fool,' though its etymology is unknown.

#### 1. Idioms From Actions Related to Objects and Nature

The expressions *khakhalē tsak* and *maghē tsak* (lit. 'the sieve is holey') originate from the semantic field of actions related to objects, acquiring the meaning 'foolish' or 'stupid'.

In the same category are the phrases *khot ēratsel* (lit. 'to graze grass') and *khot otel* (lit. 'to eat grass'), which convey the meaning 'to be a fool.' While retaining its literal meaning, this lexical combination acquires a phraseological value through stylistic intent, often mediated by negational or interrogative emphasis. For example, the question "*A tü khot es ēratsum?*" (lit. 'What, are you grazing grass?') translates to 'Are you a fool?' The participial forms *khot ēratsogh* and *khot otogh* (lit. 'grass-grazer' and 'grass-eater') have also attained phraseological stability as adjectives meaning 'foolish'.

#### 2. Phraseological Units Associated With Body Parts

Numerous phraseological units associated with body parts belong to this group of synonymic expressions. For example, *kēlkhin agh anel* (lit. 'to put salt on someone's head') means 'to deceive, to fool someone.' The stylized expression *kēlkhīt tsün käy* (lit. 'let it snow on your head') refers to a foolish but well-intentioned act. The less common adjectival form, *kēlkhin tsün ekats* (lit. 'the one on whose head snow has fallen'), means 'someone who has become foolish'.

Many expressions are formed with the word *glukh* ('head') (Kumunts, 2019, pp. 122-126):

- *kēlkhumě gram pan ch'inel* (lit. 'to have nothing weighing a gram in the head') – 'to be foolish, stupid'.
- *kēlkhumě ot khakh anel* (lit. 'to have air in the head') – 'ignorant, silly'.
- *kēlokyē k'amun tal* (lit. 'to give the head to the wind') – 'to act foolishly'.

The word *kond* ('head'), also documented in the dialect (Kumunts, 2017), appears in the phrase *kondē tertak* (lit. 'the head is empty'), which is synonymous with *glukyē datark* ('empty-headed'). Unique constructions include *ham vēnann pepek inel*, *ham kēlkhan* (lit. 'to be barefoot from both the feet and the head'), meaning 'to be both foolish and poor'.

The Old Armenian word *khelk'* ('mind, trick') has also generated numerous compounds with a negative tone, synonymous with 'stupid.' These include:

- *khelk'an pakas* (lit. 'less than the mind') – 'stupid, foolish'.
- *khelk'an pushi anel* (lit. 'to take dust out of one's mind') – 'to become stupid, to deceive'.
- *khelk'ē hats'in nēhet otel* (lit. 'to eat one's mind with bread') – 'to become stupid, to act crazy'.

Interestingly, some expressions with originally positive meanings have acquired an ironic, negative sense. The phrases *khelk'i tsov* (lit. 'sea of intelligence') and *khelk'an bol* (lit. 'more than intelligence'), once meaning 'very intelligent,' are now used ironically to signify 'foolish, idiotic.' Similarly, *khelk'ēhan inil* (lit. 'to be out of one's mind'), originally meaning 'to be enchanted,' has developed the sense 'to become foolish.' Other related idioms include *chännän khakh anel* (lit. 'to hang one's chin') – 'to become foolish and fall silent,' and *anlezu hayvan* (lit. 'a tongueless animal') for 'foolish'.

### 3. Verbal Concepts, Loanwords, and Affixation

Verbal and idiomatic concepts related to mental actions also contribute to this synonym group. The Persian word *gizh > kizh*, widespread in dialects, has various meanings including 'crazy,' 'irritable,' and, frequently, 'fool.' The Arabic word *harif*, meaning 'stupid, ignorant, easily deceived,' is common in the Syunik-Artsakh dialect, giving rise to derivatives like the idiom *harip'i tegh tinil* (lit. 'to place in the position of a simpleton'), meaning 'to deceive,' and the verb *hāripānal*, 'to be fooled.' The rarely used Arabic loanword *humbat* ('inept') has acquired the meaning 'stupid' through exaggerated connotation. The word *ghälät* ('mistake, defect'), common in Middle Eastern languages, has taken on the meaning of 'stupid, thoughtless action' in the verb *ghälät' anel*.

Dialectal suffixes are also active in forming synonyms.

- From the root *harip'*, adverbs like *harip'vach'i* and *harip'avari* ('foolishly, naively') are formed with the suffixes *-vach'i* and *-vari*, while the noun *harip'ot'un* ('stupidity') is formed with *-ot'un*.
- The root *shāsh* ('stupid, naive, foolish') is highly productive. The suffix *-avun* creates *shāshāvun* ('a little stupid'). Numerous verbs are formed with suffixes like *-v-*, *-an-*, *-ats'n-*, *-kērt-* (*shēshkērvēl*, *shāshānal*, *shāshēts'nel*, *shāshkērtel*), featuring variants based on derivation and aspect (Hovhannisyān, 2006). The reduplicated form *shāsh-māsh* is used adverbially for 'stupid-stupid,' and the related verb *shishmel* ('to go numb') also metaphorically means 'to become stupid'.

Numerous compound forms have also developed from the Classical Armenian *yimar > himar* ('fool'), giving rise to expressions like *himarot'un anel* ('to act foolishly') and *himaranal* ('to become foolish').

### 4. Idiomatic Expressions and Interjections

The idiomatic expression *vēghēs kēlkhit* (lit. 'my land on your head'), used as an emotional reproach, carries a curse-like meaning but also functions idiomatically to mean 'foolish' or 'senseless.' Similarly, expressions derived from the figurative sense of the Classical Armenian word *sh'ansh'ar* ('thin, not dense') can convey the meaning 'stupid'.

Finally, interjections like *to'!*, *ho'!*, and *ho'-ha'!*, though devoid of concrete lexical meaning, function as expressive synonyms for foolishness. Used with a distinct intonation, they serve a conceptual role in indicating or drawing attention to someone's stupidity.

This phenomenon becomes particularly apparent in lexemes derived from a shared root, where it is often challenging to determine whether they constitute independent synonymous units or are simply morphological or contextual variants of the same lexical base. To substantiate this, we examined derivatives of the root word *t'or* ('grandchild') in the Syunik-Artsakh dialectal area. Our findings indicate that, over the course of historical language development, many words have evolved—through phonetic and semantic transformation—into intermediate forms that blur the lines between synonymy and root variation.

For instance, a synonymic series denoting "descendant" has evolved through processes of semantic intensification—where the concept has been broadened or layered across dialectal variants. From the primary form *t'or* 'the child of one's child (for a grandparent),' several phonetic variants have developed: *t'ornē*, *kooṛnē*, *oṛnē*, *kaṛnē*, *aṛnē*, and *tsēṛlyāng*. Although all of these belong to the same related concept set, dialectal usage reveals subtle temporal and contextual distinctions among them. While a definitive etymological interpretation remains elusive, phonetic resemblance suggests that they all share a common root—modified by folk etymology and sound change. It is particularly noteworthy that this lexical group includes only one borrowed term—*navalar*—which is used generically to denote 'grandchildren' or 'great-grandchildren.' This term is itself conceptually related to *ch'ojukhlar* and *chēžēvēž*, further expanding the range of related terms within the dialect.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Thus, we observe that synonym groups in the Syunik-Artsakh region have undergone a complex process of formation. In Armenian linguistics, Abeghyan defines the formation of synonym groups through morphological and semantic classification based on semantically congruent pairs and synonymy (1965, pp. 154-157). However, when examining their origins, he also emphasizes stylistic peculiarities, which are undoubtedly more prevalent in dialectal variants. These words and phrases not only enrich the dialectal lexicon but also make everyday speech more vibrant, avoiding monotony.

Indeed, synonym clusters are diverse in structure, ranging from interjections (e.g., *to!*, *t'ok'sh!*) to phraseological utterances with proverbial meanings:

- *Kyasibē ūran khēlk'an a kyāsib* (literally: 'The poor man is poor because of his mind') → 'A fool remains poor due to his foolishness'.
- *Vech' kherē gidāl, vwch' sharē* (literally: 'To know neither good nor bad, neither joy nor misfortune') → 'To be naïve or simple-minded'.

Therefore, the categorization of these stylistically nuanced synonym groups cannot be absolute or perfect (Sukiasyan, 1970). As noted, studies on synonym clusters lack consensus—a trend observed even during the formative period of literary Armenian, when the standardized language had not yet fully emerged and retained dialectal features.

According to the framework by Aytnyan (1866, pp. 310-317) and Palasanean (1870, 1874), which we have extended to dialectal data, each synonym group reflects:

1. Subtle semantic distinctions between conceptually related words.
2. Differences in contextual usage (e.g., register, speech situation).

Most concepts expressed by synonyms lack standalone applicability outside specific lexical collocations. For instance, in Artsakh dialects, the adjective *budāla* (from Turkic *budala*)—used in phrases like *budala gyāda*—functions as a synonym for 'foolish, useless, empty-headed' within speech contexts. Such terms occupy an intermediate position in the continuum between lexical and phrasal synonymy, contingent upon pragmatic factors.

The word *dēmbō* ('foolish, ignorant, dull-witted') has several semantically close variants—*dangla*, *dēngēlana*, *dēngēlot'un*, *dēngēlavun* (including the verb *dēngēlanal*) and *pel*. While all express similar meanings, they differ significantly in grammatical structure and stylistic nuance. These variations suggest that the semantic overlap among members of such synonymic sets is highly relative, often leading to ambiguity and contestable classification (Avetisyan et al., 2016, pp. 80-81).

## APPENDIX

ARMENIAN DISTRIBUTION TABLE

Uppercase	Lowercase	Uppercase	Lowercase	Uppercase	Lowercase	Uppercase	Lowercase
Ա- A	ա- a	Լ- L	լ- l	Շ- Sh	շ- sh	Բ- W	բ- w
Բ- B	բ- b	Խ- Kh	խ- kh	Ո- O	ո- o	Ու- U	ու- u
Գ- g	գ- g	Ծ- Ts	ծ- ts	Չ- Ch'	չ- ch'	Փ- P'	փ- p'
Դ- D	դ- d	Կ- K	կ- k	Պ- P	պ- p	Զ- K'	զ- k'
Ե- E	ե- e	Հ- H	հ- h	Ջ- J	ջ- j	Եւ- Ew	և- ew
Զ- Z	զ- z	Ջ- Dz	ձ- dz	Ր- R	ր- r	Եվ- Ev	ևլ- ev
Է- Ē	է- ē	Դ- Gh	դ- gh	Ս- S	ս- s	Օ- O	օ- o
Ը- Ē	ը- ē	Ճ- Ch	ճ- ch	Վ- V	վ- v	Ֆ- F	ֆ- f
Թ- T'	թ- t'	Մ- M	մ- m	Տ- T	տ- t	Ու- Ü	ու- ü
Ժ- Zh	ժ- zh	Յ- Y	յ- y	Ր- R	ր- r	Ա- Ā	ա- ā
Ի- I	ի- i	Ն- N	ն- n	Յ- Ts'	չ- ts'	Օ- Ö	օ- ö

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