

Documenting Linguistic Diversity: An Analysis of Compound Word Formation in the Goris Armenian Dialect

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Abstract—This study investigates the structural, semantic, and phonetic peculiarities of genuine compound words in the Goris dialect, a vital component of the rich Armenian dialectal system. In an era of globalization where dialects face the risk of extinction due to the strong influence of literary languages, their documentation and scientific description acquire significant cultural and historical value. Employing descriptive, comparative-contrastive, and structural analysis methods, the research meticulously examines Goris dialectal phenomena by contrasting them with Literary Eastern Armenian and the closely related Artsakh dialect, and drawing upon established theories of Armenian word formation. Genuine compound words in the Goris dialect, being synthetic-type formations, on the one hand, follow the general word-formational regularities of Modern Armenian. The findings reveal that Goris compound words, while adhering to general Armenian word-formational principles (e.g., noun+noun, adjective+noun, noun/adjective+verbal root models, with and without connecting vowels), exhibit distinctive phonetic characteristics. A prominent feature is the consistent transformation of the connecting vowel 'a' to 'ə' (ə) in unstressed positions, imparting a unique phonetic fingerprint to the dialect. The study also identifies exceptional formations, including compounds derived from idiomatic structures. A comparative analysis with the Artsakh dialect highlights shared lexical and structural foundations, underscoring their genetic proximity. These findings underscore the dynamic and independent nature of dialects, contributing to a deeper understanding of Armenian linguistic history and the broader field of dialectology and language preservation.

Index Terms—Goris dialect, compound words, Armenian linguistics, dialectology, language preservation

I. INTRODUCTION

The Goris dialect, as an integral part of the rich Armenian dialectal system, is a linguistic unit that requires thorough examination. In the context of globalization, where dialects are exposed to the strong influence of the literary language and face the risk of extinction, their documentation and scientific description acquire not only linguistic but also cultural and historical value. As Vaux (2024) powerfully demonstrates in his recent comprehensive overview, many non-standard Armenian dialects are in imminent danger of disappearing, a situation that underscores the critical urgency for their thorough documentation and nuanced linguistic analysis. This call for intensified effort in documenting Armenian dialects has also been highlighted by other international scholarship (Weitenberg, 2002). Indeed, such critical urgency for thorough documentation and nuanced linguistic analysis is widely recognized as vital in the broader field of language endangerment and preservation (Austin & Sallabank, 2011).

The Goris dialect is a prominent Eastern Armenian dialect, geographically situated in the Syunik province of Southern Armenia, which borders the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan. It also historically bordered Artsakh. It belongs to the 'um' branch of Armenian dialects, specifically within the Syunik-Artsakh dialect group. A defining characteristic of the Goris dialect is its distinctive phonetic system, most notably the consistent transformation of the connecting vowel 'a' to 'ə' (schwa) in unstressed positions, which lends a unique phonetic color to its pronunciation (Vaux, 2008; Vaux & Suhairi, 2024). Morphologically, it adheres to the 'um' type present tense formation, a hallmark of Eastern Armenian varieties. Furthermore, the dialect is known for its preservation of archaic vocabulary and a rich array of compound words, including many derived from idiomatic structures, underscoring its dynamic and historically significant linguistic system (Kumunts, 2022; Margaryan, 1976).

This study aims to highlight the uniqueness of the Goris dialect and to preserve its lexical richness for future generations. A dialect is a crucial testament to the existence of a people and its history, always requiring scrutiny and, even more so, preservation.

The main objective of this study is to comprehensively examine the structural, semantic, and phonetic peculiarities of genuine compound words in the Goris dialect, contrasting them with Literary Eastern Armenian and the Artsakh dialect. This approach aligns with contemporary calls in Armenian dialectology to expand research beyond purely historical and prescriptive issues, incorporating more synchronic grammatical and sociolinguistic analysis (Vaux, 2024).

To achieve this objective, the following tasks have been set:

To present the theoretical foundations of genuine compound words, based on the works of Armenian linguists.

To classify the genuine compound words of the Goris dialect according to their formation (with connecting vowel, without connecting vowel).

To analyze the role of the connecting vowel (particularly 'a' and its phonetically altered variant 'ə') in dialectal word formation.

To conduct a comparative analysis of genuine compound words in the Goris and Artsakh dialects, revealing their commonalities and differences.

To demonstrate the phonetic and structural differences in the formation of compound words between the dialect and the literary language.

The comprehensive examination of the Goris dialect was undertaken by Aleksandr Margaryan in his monograph "The Goris Dialect," where he also addressed genuine compound words (Margaryan, 1976). The place and role of the dialect within the Armenian dialectal system have been studied by Kumunts (2022), and further perspectives on Armenian dialectology are provided by international scholars like Weitenberg (2002), Greppin and Khachaturian (1986), and Katvalyan (2014).

However, to examine the word-formational phenomena of the Goris dialect in a broader Armenian linguistic context, it is crucial to rely on the general theory of compounding and word formation. For Modern Armenian, the two main manifestations of word formation patterns—derivation and compounding—have been fundamentally defined by Jahukyan (1989). Expanding on this, Jahukyan (1989), in examining the general types of word formation patterns, distinguishes coordinative and subordinate compounds, characterizing them by such features of substantiality as composition, number, dependency, and class. Of these criteria, the first two (composition and number) relate to compounding as an integral structure, while the latter two (dependency and class) pertain to the interrelationship of its components. Indeed, the field of word-formation, encompassing derivation, compounding, and conversion, has seen a significant revival in linguistic study since the mid-20th century, becoming a central area of research (Štekauer & Lieber, 2005). In this regard, a series of works by Armenian linguists have served as a foundation. Specifically, Eloyan's (1970) article dedicated to compound words with and without connecting vowels provides an opportunity to juxtapose the regularities of the literary language with dialectal realities. Mkrtychyan's (1972) proposed classification of compound words allows for a critical analysis of traditional approaches. From the perspective of the theory of word-formational patterns, Margaryan's (1990) observations are valuable, and from the historical origin of compound words, Khachatryan's (2020) insights are significant. The synthesis of the theoretical provisions of these works allows for the examination of genuine compound words in the Goris dialect not in isolation, but as an original manifestation of the overall word-formational system of the Armenian language.

The research was conducted using several linguistic methods. The primary method employed was the descriptive method, through which the genuine compound words of the Goris dialect were presented and analyzed. The comparative-contrastive method was also applied to juxtapose dialectal phenomena with data from the literary language and the Artsakh dialect, aligning with established practices in language variation studies (Chambers et al., 2021). When analyzing the internal structure of genuine compound words, the method of structural analysis was utilized, reflecting current best practices in dialectal research (Vaux, 2024). The materials for the study included word lists available in Margaryan's (1976) work, as well as words and expressions recorded from dialect speakers by the authors during fieldwork.

II. TYPES OF COMPOUND WORDS AND THE PLACE OF GENUINE COMPOUND WORDS IN THE WORD-FORMATIONAL SYSTEM

In enriching the vocabulary of modern Armenian, compounding, along with affixation (derivation), is one of the most effective methods, as noted by Aghayan (1984). In Armenian linguistics, various approaches exist regarding the classification of compound words. Traditionally, a distinction is made between genuine (proper) and non-genuine compound words. However, as R. Mkrtychyan notes in his study, this division is not always consistent, as the characteristics typical of both types often overlap (Mkrtychyan, 1977). Therefore, he proposes dividing compound words into two main types: *synthetic* (compositional) and *analytic*. Synthetic compounds are those whose components "appear as a unified whole and possess a single lexical stress" (Mkrtychyan, 1972). The subject of our study, genuine compound words, belongs to the synthetic type according to this classification.

Essentially, genuine compound words are words formed by the combination of two or more roots, which express a new, complete meaning. This aligns with broader morphological theories (Booij, 2018). As observed by L. Hovsepyan, the connection between their components is primarily subordinate, meaning one component modifies the other (Hovsepyan, 2016).

According to the means connecting the components, genuine compound words are of two types: with a connecting vowel and without a connecting vowel.

A. Compound Words With a Connecting Vowel

The main connecting vowel in Armenian is *a*. S. Eloyan, in his article, thoroughly examines the role of the connecting vowel, noting that it, "having no semantic participation, plays a purely morphological role" and cannot be considered a full-fledged morpheme (Eloyan, 1970). In the literary language, as the author details, a stable regularity operates: when the first component ends with the vowel *i*, it becomes *e* when combined with the connecting vowel *a* ($i+a > e$), for example, $այգի+գործ \rightarrow այգեգործ$ [*aygi+gorts* \rightarrow *aygegorts*] 'gardener', $բարի+կամ \rightarrow$ $բարեկամ$ [*bari+kam* \rightarrow *barekam*] 'friend'. Knowledge of this regularity is important for evaluating the peculiarities of the Goris dialect.

B. Compound Words Without a Connecting Vowel

The formation of compound words without a connecting vowel, as Khachatryan notes, citing Jahukyan, is an older, Indo-European heritage (Khachatryan, 2020). Compound words without a connecting vowel are primarily formed when the second component begins with a vowel (e.g., $բազմերանգ$ [*bazmerang*] 'multi-colored', $հանրօգուտ$ [*hanrōgut*]

'publicly beneficial'), because, as Eloyan substantiates, the connecting vowel usually drops out before a vowel (Eloyan, 1970).

III. STRUCTURAL-SEMANTIC EXAMINATION OF GENUINE COMPOUND WORDS IN THE GORIS DIALECT

The Goris dialect, while conforming to the general word-formational regularities of Armenian, at the same time exhibits a number of unique features in the formation of genuine compound words. In the dialect, as in the literary language, genuine compound words can be with a connecting vowel and without a connecting vowel (Margaryan, 1976).

A. Genuine Compound Words With a Connecting Vowel and Their Phonetic Peculiarities

In the Goris dialect, as in Literary Armenian, genuine compound words with a connecting vowel constitute a predominant number (Margaryan, 1990). However, in contrast to the literary language, where the connecting vowel *a* is either stable or transforms into *e*, in the Goris dialect, it demonstrates exceptional phonetic flexibility, which is one of the most expressive features of the dialect.

According to Margaryan's classification and our observations, the following manifestations of the behavior of the connecting vowel *a* can be distinguished (Margaryan, 1976):

(a). The Connecting Vowel 'a' Remains Unchanged

It remains unchanged when it is stressed, mainly in the case of a monosyllabic final component: քրշ+ա'+թօխայ [k'ěsh+á+t'ókhp] 'fog', ծրրք+ա'+փօղ [tsěrk'+á+p'ógh] 'hand-pipe (a specific type of pipe)', քրթ+ա'+ծակ [k'ět'+á+tsak] 'nostril, figuratively: intelligence, wit'.

(b). The Connecting Vowel 'a' Transforms Into 'ä'

This occurs due to the law of vowel harmony (mainly under the influence of *i* and *e* vowels), again appearing in compound words with a monosyllabic final component: իրիւ+ա'+տէղ [iris+ä+tēgh] 'respect, honor', ճիր+ա'+ծէտ [chir+ä+tsēt] 'a type of bird found on riverbanks', վիլ+ա'+տու [vil+ä+tü] 'spinning wheel tool'.

(c). The Connecting Vowel 'a' Transforms Into 'ě' ('ə')

This is the most characteristic and widespread phonetic regularity of the dialect, occurring when the connecting vowel appears in an unstressed position before the stressed syllable. This phenomenon is observed in words with both polysyllabic and monosyllabic final components and is considered the phonetic hallmark of the dialect: ծնւն+ը+խաւնը [tsün+ě+khár'ně] 'snow-mixed', վնդ+ը+կաղի [vënd+ě+kaghī] 'foot-stuck/footed', սրտ+ը+կուտուր [sért+ě+kutur] 'heartbroken', ըխպր+ը+կին [ěkhpér+ě+kin] 'brother's wife', ըշկ+ը+տիրա՞ծ [ěshk+ě+tiräts] 'having an eye on / observed'.

(d). Other Phonetic Transformations of the Connecting Vowel 'a'

In some cases, again under the influence of the law of vowel harmony, *a* can also transform into *i* or *u/ü* vowels, such as ճիր+ի+թաթախ [chir+i+t'at'akh] (or ճիրըթաթախ [chir'ět'at'akh]) 'water-soaked', լից+ի+կնւմլ [liç+i+kümēl / lüts'+ü+kümēl] 'to cry'.

(e). In Compound Words Borrowed From the Literary Language

It is interesting that in compound words adopted by the dialect from the literary language, the connecting vowel, as a rule, does not undergo dialectal phonetic transformation and remains *a*, although it may be reduced in pronunciation: ըղ+ա+ճնր [ěgh+a+chür] 'salt water', լղ+ա+ճաք [lěgh+a+chak] 'fear', վնդ+ա+կօխ [vënd+a+kōkh] 'trampled by foot'.

B. Genuine Compound Words Without a Connecting Vowel

In contrast to compound words with a connecting vowel, genuine compound words without a connecting vowel are significantly fewer in number in the Goris dialect, as in the literary language. They are formed mainly in two cases, following the general word-formational regularities of Armenian (Margaryan, 1976).

(a). When the Second Component Begins With a Vowel

This is the most common model for the formation of compound words without a connecting vowel, which, as mentioned in the theoretical section, is due to the omission of the connecting vowel before a vowel.

Examples: սըվ+ի'րլտ [sěv+irēs] 'black-faced', ցրի+ւ'վի [ts'ěkh+évil] 'broom', մրթ+ա'ւտէ [mět'+ásēgh] 'pin', յըղ+ա'ման [yěgh+áman] 'oil-lamp/oil-jar'.

(b). When the Second Component Begins With a Consonant

This group is smaller and more interesting because here the absence of a connecting vowel is not determined by a phonetic law, but by word-formational tradition. Often, words in this group are formed by combining a noun and a verbal root or a word expressing an action.

Examples: հաղ+թօխ [hats'+t'ókhh] 'baker', թէր+խաշ [t'ēr+khash] 'partially cooked, half-cooked', ճրրք+կալ [chěřk'+kal] 'lamp stand/candelabra', քթ+կալ [k'ět'+kal] 'woman's facial veil'.

(c). *Other Peculiarities of Compound Words Without a Connecting Vowel*

Despite their small number, genuine compound words without a connecting vowel in the Goris dialect exhibit some interesting manifestations:

1. *Historical Omission of the Connecting Vowel*: Some words that, in the past, were likely formed with a connecting vowel have lost it in the dialect and are now used as compound words without a connecting vowel. This demonstrates the dynamic development of the language. For example, the Literary Armenian compound word նախալոթոն [chakhat't'u] 'beetroot pickle', which includes a connecting vowel, has become the compound word ճրխլոթո [chëkht'ët'ō] without a connecting vowel in the Goris dialect. Similarly, թթու+խմոր [t't'u+khmor] 'sourdough' > տրխտմոր/թրթխմոր [tëkhtëmōr/t'ët'khëmōr] 'sourdough'.
2. *Connection with Idiomatic Structures*: Some compound words without a connecting vowel, in their structure, resemble idioms or stable collocations that have, over time, fused and become a single word. For instance, the word չափարախ/չրմփարախ [ch'ap'arakh/ch'ëmp'arakh] 'gallop (four-hoofed)' (meaning 'four-hoofed gallop') may have originated from the combination չորս+ոտք [ch'ors+otk'] 'four+legs'.
3. *Exceptional Formations*: The compound word դիբիրգադեմ [dibirgädēm] (դեպի+երեկոյ+ա+դեմ [depi+yerekoy+a+dēm] 'towards+evening+a+face/front' meaning 'towards evening') is exceptional not only due to the presence of a connecting vowel (which deviates from the general rule of this section) but also by its formation, which includes a preposition and multiple components. However, considering it as a fusion of the stable collocation "դեպի երեկո" [depi yereko] 'towards evening', it represents a unique type of compound derived from an idiomatic structure.

Another remarkable example of a unique formation, deeply rooted in the historical development of Armenian, is the word սարսընգի || արսընգի [sarasëngi || arasëngi], used in the dialectal area to mean "swing" or "a long wooden swing." This term, primarily used in children's games ("Սարս-սընգի, արս-սընգի, քարին իրսն տախտակը տնգի" [sara-sëngi, sara-sëngi, k'arin irän taxtakë tēngi] "Swing, swing, put the board on the stone"), is attested in the Syunik-Artsakh dialect group, including Urmia (Sargsyan, 2008). Its etymology traces back to the Proto-Indo-European root **sueng(k)*- meaning 'to bend, curve, swing.' This root has phonetic and semantic parallels in Germanic dialects (e.g., German *schwenken* 'to swing', Old High German *swenken* 'swing'), as well as in Old Irish (*seng* 'thin, slender') and Old Saxon (*swingan* 'to swing oneself') (Torosyan, 2018; Pokorny, 1959). The variant սարսընգի [arasëngi] is believed to have undergone a phonetic shift (**sueng(k)* > *ar- sueng(e)*) due to compounding, demonstrating a different phenomenon from the regular Proto-Indo-European *s > h* || 0 (*s > h* or 0) change in Armenian (cf. առ-(ա)-սպել [ar-(a)-spel] < Gothic *spill* 'story') (Jahukyan, 1987). The form սարսընգի [sarasëngi] is thought to have developed within the dialect group through analogy with the initial u- [s-] of the second component. This word is not found in early literary sources or linguistic studies, highlighting its ancient, purely dialectal origin and significance for understanding the deeper historical layers of the Goris dialect.

C. *Word-Formational and Semantic Analysis of Genuine Compound Words*

The examination of genuine compound words in the Goris dialect would not be complete without an analysis of the parts of speech and semantic connections of their components. Among the most active patterns in neologisms are the noun+noun, adjective+noun, and verb+noun models, which is fully confirmed by the material of the Goris dialect as well. A statistical analysis of our studied material shows that compound words formed with a connecting vowel predominate in the dialect, and among these, the phonetically altered connecting vowel 'ե' (ə) is, in turn, dominant.

A notable example illustrating the semantic and etymological complexity in the Goris dialect is the compound word գիլիմասրի [gilimasri] 'potato' (a dialectal term for topinambour/ground apple). As Kumunts extensively details, this term, alongside variants like գրլըմասրի [gëlëmasri], is considered a dialectal form derived from the Old Armenian գերմաստ [germast]. Kumunts traces its etymology to the combination of Proto-Indo-European roots **ger-* ('flexible, curved') and *mast* ('thick, solid, firm'), suggesting a semantic evolution that reflects both the plant's physical characteristics and potential historical linguistic shifts within the dialect (Kumunts, 2019). This specific analysis provides valuable insight into the dialect's vocabulary formation and its deep historical layers.

Below, we present examples of genuine compound words characteristic of the Goris dialect, classified according to the most common word-formational models (see Table 1).

TABLE 1
CLASSIFICATION OF GENUINE COMPOUND WORDS IN THE GORIS DIALECT ACCORDING TO WORD-FORMATIONAL MODELS

Word-Formational Model	Dialectal Example	Literary Equivalent/Explanation
1. Noun + Noun		
(With connecting vowel)	կրորսիմակ [k'ēr+ē+timāk]	'lamb's fat tail'
	տրնաստեր [tēn+a+tēr]	'landlord, master of the house'
	շոնալափ [shēn+a+lāp']	'dog's food (mash)'
(Without connecting vowel)	բղրսիբի [ēgh+ē+tiri]	'salt shaker'
	յողաման [yēgh+aman]	'oil lamp/oil jar'
	ցրխվիլ [ts'ēkh+ēvil]	'broom'
	կիրիզմոտ [kiriz+mōt]	'cemetery'
	ծղաման [tsēgh+amān]	'straw vessel (hat)'
2. Adjective + Noun		
(With connecting vowel)	սրտրկուտուր [sērt+ē+katur]	'heartbroken, in tears'
	ղոռբոռ [ghēr+ē+bēr]	'uproar, noise (onomatopoeic origin)'
(Without connecting vowel)	սրվիլի [sēv+irēs]	'black-faced, unfortunate'
	գիլիմասրի [gili+masri]	'potato (literally 'ground apple)'
	կրխլոթ [k'ēlkh[ē]+vōr]	'headfirst'
3. Noun/Adjective + Verbal Root		
(With connecting vowel)	ըշկրիլի [ēshk+ē+tirāts]	'having an eye on / observed'
	վնդրկաղի [vënd+ē+kaghi]	'foot-stuck / footed'
	պրկրիան [p'ēlk+ē+han]	'peeled, stripped of bark'
	վրդրիան [v'ēgh+ē+han]	'earth remover / excavator'
(Without connecting vowel)	հացթոխ [hats'+t'ōkh]	'baker'
4. Exceptional Formations		
Mixed	դիբիրգա՞ղեմ [dīb+irg+ā+dēm]	'towards evening' (Preposition+Noun)
	մեկաստեղ [mēk+sa+tēn[ē]]	'henceforth, from now on' (Pronoun+Adverb)
	ճիսրկեղ [ch'ōkht+ē+kēnd]	'even and odd (coordinative compound)'

D. Comparative Analysis of Genuine Compound Words in the Goris and Artsakh Dialects

To gain a deeper understanding of the linguistic peculiarities of the Goris dialect, it is important to examine it in the context of related dialects, particularly the Artsakh dialect. These two dialects, belonging to the "um" branch's "s" sub-branch, share numerous commonalities, which are vividly manifested in the vocabulary and formation of genuine compound words, as extensively studied in recent works (Kumunts et al., 2025). The classification and key features of these related dialects are discussed in detail in comprehensive studies of Armenian dialectology (Jahukyan, 1972).

The comparative table presented below (see Table 2) shows a series of common compound words used in both dialects, along with their literary equivalents.

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF GENUINE COMPOUND WORDS IN THE GORIS AND ARTSAKH DIALECTS

Goris Dialect	Artsakh Dialect	Literary Armenian	Commentary
զամեղ [zamēr] 'the beloved has died'	բզբզամեղ/բզբզամեղ [ēzēzāmēr/ēzēzāmēr]	ազիզամեղ [azizamer]	In the Artsakh dialect, the initial 'ե' (ə) is added.
քեթկալ [k'ēt'kal] 'nose clip / a type of veil'	քթթկալ [k'ēt'kal]	քթկալ [k't'kal]	In the Goris dialect, there is an alternation of 'ե' and 'թ' (ə).
քթթածակ [k'ēt'atsak] 'nostril'	քթթածակ [k'ēt'atsak]	քթթածակ [k't'atsak]	Almost complete congruence.
դիբիրգա՞ղեմ [dibirgādēm] 'towards evening'	դրբրրո՞ղեմ [dēbērügünadēm]	դեպի երեկոյի դեմ [depi yerekoyi dem]	Both dialects have preserved the compound formation, but with different phonetic manifestations.
հրավեհաս [hēsvehas] 'soon to come / soon to arrive'	հրավիհաս [hēsvehas]	հասվեհաս [hasvehas]	Different positions of the 'ե' (ə) sound.
ըրխիվեր [ērkhivēr] 'face down, headfirst'	ըրխիվեր [rēkhēvēr]	բերանքսիվայր [berank'sivayr]	Transposition of 'ե' (ə) and 'ր' (n), but the roots are the same.
դիբա՞լու [dibālūs] 'at dawn'	դրբրու/դիբիլու [dēbēlūs/dibilūs]	լուսաղեմ [lusadem]	Similar to the example of dibirgādēm.
պա՞ցալից [pāts'pits'ōru] 'openly, publicly'	պեցալից [pēts'apēts']	բացիբաց [bats'eibats']	The most interesting difference: In Goris, the archaic '-ōru' ending has been preserved, while in Artsakh, the principle of reduplication is at work.
ազկըծույալ [azkēsūpē] 'the whole family, clan, lineage'	ազկ-ծույալ [azk-tsūp]	ազգուծույալ [azgutsūp]	In the Goris variant, the connecting vowel 'ե' (ə) is present.

E. An Etymological and Semantic Analysis of the Compound Word փրքսեղ [p'ērsevēr] in the Goris Armenian Dialect

The word փրքսեղ [p'ērsevēr] is a striking example of a term unique to the Syunik-Artsakh dialect group, yet not found in all Armenian dialects. Its origin and semantic development reveal significant insights into the deeper historical

layers and linguistic dynamism within this regional variety of Armenian. Crucially, in the challenging context following the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict (2020-2023), which has severely impacted the native environment of the Artsakh dialect, the Goris dialect's preservation of such unique vocabulary serves as a vital testament to linguistic diversity.

(a). *Etymological and Semantic Origins*

The term փրքսօր [p'ěrsěvēr] is the dialectal equivalent of Literary Eastern Armenian *berank'sivayr* 'face down, prone,' which in turn originates from the phrase բերասնս ի վայր [berans i vayr] 'face downwards' (Acharyan, 1971). It is composed of the root փրքս [p'ěrs-] (from բերասն [beran] 'mouth/face'), the preposition ի [i], and վայր [vayer] 'down/place.' In Proto-Indo-European (PIE) root patterns, the word բերասն [beran] 'mouth' (Jahukyan, 2010; Pokorny, 1959) originates from the root **bher-*, whose primary meanings of '1. throat, gullet, 2. narrow passage' are no longer preserved in the Syunik-Artsakh dialect group. Nevertheless, the root փրքս [p'ěrs] does not appear independently with the meaning 'mouth/face' either in isolation or as part of other compounds in this dialect, leading to the hypothesis that the suffix '-an' of բերասն [beran] developed later, and the dialectal variant փրքս [p'ěrs] is simply another form of the common Armenian word բերասն [beran].

(b). *Phonetic Evolution*

The phonetic shifts in փրքսօր [p'ěrsěvēr] in the Goris dialect reflect characteristic patterns of the Syunik-Artsakh dialect group (Margaryan, 1976).

1. The initial 'b' of բերասն [beran] 'mouth' regularly undergoes lenition, becoming 'p' in the dialect (e.g., բերասն [beran] > պերասն [p'ėran], բուկ [buk] > պօկ [p'ok] 'mouthpiece', բահ [bah] > պահ [p'ah] 'spade').
2. Concurrently, /b/ often undergoes aspiration, becoming /p'h/ (written as փ) when preceding 'r' or 'r' (e.g., բուրվասն [burvar] 'censer' > փրքս [p'hɾvar], բռնել [brnel] 'to hold' > փրքնել [p'hɾnel] 'to catch', Classical Armenian բրդեմ [brdem] 'to pluck' > փրքթիլ [p'hɾt'il]). Variant forms like փիրթիլ [p'hirt'il] (with i) suggest an earlier phonetic stage. Other phonetic variants of p'ěrsěvēr, such as փրքսվեր || փրքսօր || փիսիվեր || փրքսըր [p'ėsvēr || p'ėrsěēr || p'isivēr || p'ėrsěyēr], further corroborate these phonological tendencies.
3. The u 's' in p'ěrsěvēr (from բերասնս ի վայր [berans i vayr]) originates from the Classical Armenian accusative plural suffix -s, which imparted a generalized meaning to the word, signifying 'the mouths' (e.g., պիր-նին [pir-nin] 'the mouths').
4. The preposition 'ի' [i] (in բերասնս ի վայր [berans i vayr]) is frequently reduced to ě (schwa) in most dialectal variants due to stress loss.
5. Finally, the Classical Armenian word վայր [vayr] 'down' evolved into վեր || յեր [vēr || yēr] in the Syunik-Artsakh dialect group. The initial /v/ of վեր [vēr] further shifts to /y/ when preceding /ē/ (e.g., Classical Armenian վերայ [vėray] 'above' > յիրա [yira], վեր [vēr] > յեր [yēr] 'up').

(c). *Semantic Development and Usage*

The diverse applications of p'ěrsěvēr in the Goris dialect demonstrate its semantic dynamism and richness. These include:

- Փրքսօրվեր աճել [p'ěrsěvēr anel] 'to turn over'
- Փրքսօրվեր ինել [p'ěrsěvēr inel] '1. to fall face down, 2. fig. to become ill, 3. (Artsakh dial. (Sargsyan, 2013)) to become annoyed'
- Փրքսօրվեր քիցել [p'ěrsěvēr k'itsel] 'to turn'
- Փրքսօրվեր յեշել [p'ěrsěvēr yěshel] 'to look askance'
- Փրքսօրվեր քօն ինել [p'ěrsěvēr k'on inel] 'to sleep face down'
- Փրքսօրվերվել [p'ěrsěvėrvel] '1. to resist, 2. to fall, 3. to become ill, 4. to die'

(d). *Sociolinguistic and Cultural Context*

The narratives surrounding p'ěrsěvēr, recounted by Elmira Eylazyan (38 years old) and Sveta Snetsunts (67 years old) from Tegh-Khndzoresk, highlight its cultural and historical significance. One account states that 'beautiful girls born in Tegh village were put փրքսօրվեր [p'ěrsěvēr] so they wouldn't fall into the hands of foreigners.' Another version suggests that 'girls born in Tegh village were put փրքսօրվեր [p'ěrsěvēr] so that more boys would be born.' While these stories are products of folk etymology, they reflect the dialect's vitality and its deep connection to local identity and historical circumstances.

F. *Etymological Analysis of the Reduplicative Compound կուրկուր [Kurkup]: A Comparative View*

Another compelling example of the Goris dialect's lexical depth is the reduplicative compound *kurkup* (կուրկուր), which carries meanings related to being silent, huddled, or closed off. The etymology of this word is subject to debate, with two primary hypotheses offering different explanations for its formation. The following table provides a comparative analysis of these two viewpoints, examining the proposed structure, origin of components, and supporting evidence for each.

TABLE 3
COMPARATIVE ETYMOLOGICAL HYPOTHESES FOR THE DIALECTAL WORD KURKUP'

Criterion	Hypothesis 1: Compound of Two Distinct Roots	Hypothesis 2: Reduplication of a Single Root
Core Principle	The combination of two different Proto-Indo-European (PIE) roots.	The reduplication and subsequent phonetic alteration of a single root.
Word Structure	կուր- [kur-] (separate root) + կուի- [kup'-] (separate root)	կուր- [kur-] (altered form of -կուի [-kup']) + կուր- [kur-].
Origin of First Component (+ կուր- [kur-])	Derived from PIE root *ghūbh-. Slavic cognates: Russian gubá (губа, 'lip'), Serbian gübica ('muzzle'), Bulgarian гъба (гъба, 'mouth'). Other cognates: Greek gamphái (γαμφαί, 'jawbone').	An altered, reduplicated version of the root -կուի [-kup'].
Origin of Second Component (- կուի [-kup'])	Derived from PIE root *ghaph- ('to grab, seize'). Based on the root կաի [kap'] from the verb կաիմուցանի [kap'uts'anel] ('to seal, close'), as well as կաի [khap'], կուի [khup'].	Agrees with Hypothesis 1: derived from PIE root *ghaph- ('to grab, seize') → կուի [khup'].
Formation Mechanism	Simple compounding of the two proposed roots.	Reduplication with dissimilation: կուի-կուի [kup'-kup'] → Regressive dissimilation of the initial /p/ (փ) to /r/ (ր) → կուրկուի [kurkup']. Parallels in Armenian: թափ-թափ [t'ap'-t'ap'] > թարթափ [t'art'ap'] ('drizzle'); սափ-սափ [sap'-sap'] > սարսափ [sarsap'] ('horror').
Supporting Evidence	The existence of the root in other Indo-European languages, particularly Slavic.	The semantics of dialectal forms: կրկուի կյալ [k'erkup' kyal] ('to fall silent'), կուրկուի ինիլ [kurkup' inil] ('to huddle up'), and use for 'rain holding off' all support the core idea of "closing" or "sealing."
Weaknesses / Unexplained Issues	Does not adequately explain the presence of /r/ in the related verb կուարիլ [kuprēl]. An alternative theory suggests կուարիլ [kuprēl] could be linked to կուարիլ [kuprē] ('tar, pitch'), which would invalidate its connection to this root.	Presents a more internally consistent and complete explanation, with strong parallels within Armenian word formation.

As the comparative table illustrates, the second hypothesis—which posits an origin from reduplication followed by phonetic dissimilation—offers a more robust and internally consistent explanation. It is supported by well-attested phonetic processes within Armenian (e.g., թարթափ [t'art'ap'], սարսափ [sarsap']) and demonstrates strong semantic coherence with the word's actual usage in the Goris dialect. In contrast, the first hypothesis, while providing plausible external cognates, struggles to account for the internal phonological details of related dialectal forms and the specific mechanism for the compound's formation.

IV. ANALYSIS AND OBSERVATIONS

The examination of the examples provided in Table 2 and the general lexicon allows for several important conclusions to be drawn regarding the relationship between the Goris and Artsakh dialects, particularly concerning genuine compound words.

A. Shared Lexical Fund and Structural Similarities

Both dialects possess a significant common lexical fund of genuine compound words, which strongly attests to their close historical and linguistic ties. The underlying word-formational models for these compounds are almost identical, suggesting a shared evolutionary path for their compounding mechanisms. This consistency in structural patterns reinforces their classification within the same dialectal sub-branch.

B. Phonetic Correspondences and Divergences

While sharing structural commonalities, the primary distinctions between the two dialects manifest at the phonetic level, particularly concerning vowel usage and transformation.

(a). The Role of the Vowel 'ե' (ə)

The vowel 'ե' (ə) is highly active in both dialects, yet its manifestation differs. In the Goris dialect, it predominantly serves as a phonetically altered variant of the connecting vowel *a* (e.g., սզկըծուսը [azk'etsupē] 'the whole family, clan, lineage'), directly participating in the formation of compounds. In contrast, in the Artsakh dialect, it frequently appears as an initial epenthetic addition (e.g., ըզզամըր [ēzēzamēr] 'the beloved has died'), serving a more phonological rather than purely morphological function at the beginning of words. This subtle difference highlights distinct phonological processes at play.

(b). Vowel Alternation and Instability

A notable feature is the frequent instability and alternation of vowels. For instance, the 'ե' in Goris (քէթկալ [k'ēt'kal] 'nose clip / a type of veil') can correspond to the 'ե' (ə) in Artsakh (քրթկալ [k'ēt'kal]). Similarly, Goris's 'ի' (as in դիբալիս [dibālūs] 'at dawn') might correspond to Artsakh's 'ե' (ə) (as in դեբելիս [dēbēlūs]). These alternations suggest dynamic phonetic shifts and localized pronunciation preferences within an otherwise common lexical base. Such variations provide valuable insights into the microevolution of vowel systems within closely related dialects.

C. Preservation of Archaic Forms

The pair *պստիցախորն* [*päts'pits'öru*] (Goris) versus *պէտսպէտ* [*pēts'apēts'*] (Artsakh) warrants particular attention. In the Goris dialect, the ancient instrumental case ending *'-öru'* (cf. Classical Armenian *zör-u*) has been preserved, representing an exceptional archaism. This structure, which links the compound to older morphological patterns, indicates a more conservative linguistic retention in Goris. Conversely, the Artsakh dialect employs the more modern principle of reduplication to convey emphasis or iteration. This stark contrast suggests that the Goris dialect, in certain instances, can be more conservative and retain older linguistic features that have been lost or transformed in other related dialects. This finding is crucial for understanding the historical development and divergence of Armenian dialects.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The structural-semantic examination of genuine compound words in the Goris dialect allows for the following main conclusions:

Genuine compound words in the Goris dialect, being synthetic-type formations, on the one hand, follow the general word-formational regularities of Modern Armenian. They exhibit types with and without connecting vowels, as well as subordinate relationships between their components. The most productive word-formational models are the "noun+noun," "adjective+noun," and "noun+verbal root" types.

On the other hand, the dialect demonstrates a number of unique and exceptional features. Key among these is the phonetic behavior of the connecting vowel *a*, particularly its consistent transformation to *'ə'* (ə) in unstressed positions (e.g., *սրտսրկուտուր* [*sərt'əkutur*] 'heartbroken', *բիսպրբիկին* [*əkhpəřəkin*] 'brother's wife'). This phenomenon, contrasting with the canonical *e* connecting vowel in the literary language, imparts a distinctive phonetic color to the dialect and serves as one of its most important distinguishing characteristics.

The comparative analysis of the Goris and Artsakh dialects confirmed their genetic proximity, which is manifested through shared vocabulary and similar word-formational models. Simultaneously, subtle phonetic differences were revealed (e.g., distinct manifestations of the vowel *'ə'* (ə), vowel alternations) and, in some cases, the more conservative nature of the Goris dialect (e.g., the preservation of archaic endings in the word *պստիցախորն* [*päts'pits'öru*]).

Finally, this work once again confirms that dialects are not corrupted versions of the literary language, but rather independent, rich, and dynamic systems. The study of the word-formational richness of the Goris dialect is important not only from the perspective of the history of the Armenian language but also for preserving its current vitality and diversity, echoing the broader calls for comprehensive dialectal research and preservation efforts (Vaux, 2024).

This work can serve as a foundation for further investigations. Promising areas for future study could include a comparative analysis of non-genuine and fossilized compound words in the Goris dialect, as well as an examination of the usage of these compounds in the speech of contemporary dialect speakers to ascertain their degree of vitality.

APPENDIX

ARMENIAN TRANSLITERATION 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	Ք- K'	ք- k'
Ե- E	ե- e	Հ- H	հ- h	Ջ- J	ջ- j	Էւ- Ew	ևւ- ew
Զ- Z	զ- z	Ջ- Dz	ձ- dz	Ր- R	ր- r	Եվ- Ev	ելվ- ev
Է- Ē	է- ē	Դ- Gh	դ- gh	Ս- S	ս- s	Օ- O	օ- o
Ը- Ē	ը- ě	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- Ä	ա- ä
Ի- I	ի- i	Ն- N	ն- n	Յ- Ts'	յ- ts'	Օ- Ö	օ- ö

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