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Grammatical Gender of Armenian Realias in German

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the transliterated forms of Armenian realities from the point of view of their generic adaptation in German for identifying patterns based on which Armenian genderless realia-nouns are distributed according to oppositions of grammatical gender in German. The authors refer to German travel guides compiled by both German-speaking travelers and Armenian authors who represent their country in German. In addition, an analysis of the corresponding lexemes was carried out on the Wikipedia website. It came to the conclusion that, since Armenian does not have a category of grammatical gender and suffixes such as the German gender markers do not exist in Armenian, Armenian realities are assigned genders automatically. In most cases, the gender choice is governed by semantic properties, e.g., analogies with broad categories, species concepts, or lexical-semantic fields. The analysis also revealed some fluctuations in the choice of gender, which, according to the authors, may be due to the factor with which particular generic concept these words are associated by either the German-speaking author of the text or the Armenian translator. In addition, in some cases, the influence of morphological features associated with suffixes—generic indicators of German nouns—is possible. Based on this, it is concluded that from the point of view of generic classification, Armenian realities are adapted in German in the overwhelming majority on a semantic basis by analogy with a general species or synonymous concept or under the influence of lexical-semantic fields.

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 10 June 2025 | Revised: 1 July 2025 | Accepted: 14 July 2025 | Published Online: 18 September 2025
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i9.10436>

CITATION

Savoyan, G., Yaghubyan, M., 2025. Grammatical Gender of Armenian Realias in German. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. 7(9): 1078–1089.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i9.10436>

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Keywords: Grammatical Gender; Realia; Adaptation; Analogy; Formal Indicators

1. Introduction

The renowned genius of the Armenian people—linguist, polyglot, and translator Hrachya Acharian^[1]—expressed the following view on grammatical gender:

“Among us, there are people who consider the existence of grammatical gender a phenomenon that makes a language more beautiful, enriching it and adding precision. They believe that the Armenian language, lacking grammatical gender, is deprived of this advantage. These people fail to see the various inconveniences in language caused by grammatical gender”.

The equally famous German linguist, founder of German philology, Jacob Grimm, held a different opinion^[2]:

“As a result of this remarkable operation, many expressions that previously contained dead and outdated concepts seemed to regain life and feeling; by borrowing forms, structures, and inflections from natural gender, this operation infused the entire language with a charm of motion and at the same time created a close bond between parts of speech. If gender were to disappear from the language, one could no longer imagine the connection between words that we so admire in Greek and Latin syntax”.

Such diametrically opposed views among scholars are no coincidence, since the presence of grammatical gender in a language involves not only countless rules for gender differentiation of nouns but also a considerable number of exceptions to those rules. Being one of the more complex linguistic categories, grammatical gender in the German language manifests itself on multiple linguistic levels and represents a specific system of phonological, morphological, semantic, and syntactic features.

While native speakers, due to their intuitive linguistic competence, operate within a certain language model when choosing the correct gender form, for non-native speakers,

gender is often the most vulnerable aspect in the process of language acquisition, since it manifests itself inconsistently across all levels of the language.

The category of gender in the German language is an inseparable feature of nouns, expressed through the article. At the same time, adjectives and pronouns also show agreement in gender with the noun. According to Hockett “Genders are classes of nouns reflected in the behavior of associated words”^[3]. The grammatical gender of living beings in German is partially motivated by biological sex — for example, *der Vater* “father” – *die Mutter* “mother”, *der Bruder* “brother” – *die Schwester* “sister”, *der Onkel* “uncle” – *der Bruder* “aunt”. To some extent, biological sex is also reflected in the names of animals, especially when emphasizing their functional roles—for example, alongside the neutral form *das Pferd* (“horse”), there are gender-specific terms such as *die Stute* (“mare”) and *der Hengst* (“stallion”), the noun *das Rind* neuter meaning (“cattle”) contrasts with *die Kuh* feminine, (“cow”) and *der Stier* (masculine, “bull”). From this perspective, gender is partially expressed semantically. At the same time, alongside such gendered oppositions, there are also nouns of so-called common gender, such as *der Esel* (masculine, “donkey”), *die Kuh* (feminine, “cow”), and *das Pferd* (neuter, “horse”). These make up the vast majority of animal designations in the language^[4].

Moreover, when biologically animate nouns exhibit formal gender markers typical of the German language, biological sex is often neutralized, and the decisive factor in determining grammatical gender becomes the suffix — as seen in *das Mädchen* (neuter, “girl”) and *das Fräulein* (neuter, “young lady”).

On the other hand, the noun *das Weib* (neuter, “woman” — archaic or derogatory) also belongs to the neuter gender. This shift in gender is linked to a change in the word’s connotation. *Das Weib* has come to be associated with coarse or vulgar usage, in contrast to *die Dame* (“lady”) or *die Frau* (“woman”) ^[5].

Despite this, determining gender based on morphological features would seem to be more straightforward. For instance, nouns ending in *-ung*, *-heit*, *-keit*, *-schaft*, *-tät*, *-ie*, *-ei*, *-ur*, and *-tion/-sion* are typically feminine. Suffixes like

-chen, -lein, -tum, and -nis generally indicate neuter gender. Animate nouns ending in -ent, -ant, -and, -ler, and -er are usually masculine. Compare: *die Bildung* (fem., “education”), *die Weisheit* (fem., “wisdom”), *die Wissenschaft* (fem., “science”), *das Tischchen* (neut., “small table”), *das Büchlein* (neut., “little book”), *der Dozent* (masc., “lecturer”), *der Aspirant* (masc., “graduate student”), *der Doktorand* (masc., “doctoral candidate”), *der Tischler* (masc., “carpenter”), and so on.

However, even in this case there are exceptions to the rules, such as *das Abitur* (neut., “high school final exams”) and *das Stadion* (neut., “stadium”). Furthermore, the language contains so-called pseudo-suffixes — suffixes that do not consistently indicate one particular gender and can be associated with different ones, such as -er, -el, -en, and -e: *das Fenster* (neut., “window”) – *der Lehrer* (masc., “teacher”), *die Kugel* (fem., “ball”) – *das Segel* (neut., “sail”) – *der Stempel* (masc., “stamp”). These inconsistencies often confuse learners of German.

Furthermore, to a certain extent, the choice of grammatical gender is also influenced by analogy within lexical-semantic fields. Based on a general category or semantic class, it is sometimes possible to determine the gender of a noun by analogy. This applies, for example, to the names of days of the week, months, parts of the day, car brands, types of wind, and so on.

For instance, the word *der Wind* (masculine, “wind”) is masculine, and therefore most types of wind are masculine by analogy: *der Monsun* (“monsoon”), *der Passat* (“trade wind”), *der Samum* (“simoom”), *der Föhn* (“foehn wind”), *der Mistral* (“mistral”), *der Musson* (“monsoon”), etc. However, there are exceptions such as *die Brise* (fem. “breeze”) and *die Bora* (fem. “bora wind”).

Similarly, following the pattern of *der Wagen* (masculine, “car”), car brand names are typically masculine: *der Opel*, *der Mercedes*, *der BMW*, and so on. From this point of view “[...] gender always has a semantic core: there are no gender systems in which the genders are purely formal categories”^[6].

Nevertheless, in most cases, the distribution of nouns across grammatical genders does not follow clear logic, often contradicts general rules, and causes confusion for non-native speakers when determining gender—for example, *der Tisch* (masc. “table”), *das Fenster* (neuter “window”), *die*

Tür (fem. “door”).

In this context, linguistics distinguishes between grammatical, lexical, and referential (gender-related) gender. *Grammatical gender* classifies the vocabulary into gender classes. *Lexical gender* is observed where the biological sex of a person, expressed by a single word, is preserved in its meaning (as in the pair *father – mother*). *Referential gender* refers to the biological sex of the referent^[7].

Such mismatches in gender have stimulated further investigation of gender from another angle—namely, from the perspective of gender assimilation of loanwords. However, our analysis of borrowings and their adaptation in the German language also revealed a complex and, to a certain extent, chaotic system of gender assimilation of nouns. A detailed study of a significant number of borrowings from various source and intermediary languages revealed the following patterns: similar principles of gender differentiation apply to both native German nouns and borrowings. On the one hand, borrowed nouns tend to retain the gender of their source or intermediary language (if one is present). On the other hand, analogy and morphological markers also play a role. Thus, many borrowings adopted not only the form but also the grammatical gender of the source language: Latin *textus* (masc.) → *der Text* (masc., “text”), Latin *nervus* (masc.) → *der Nerv* (masc., “nerve”), Latin *exāmen* (neut.) → *das Examen* (neut., “exam”), Latin *exemplar* (neut.) → *das Exemplar* (neut., “specimen”), French *garde-robe* (fem.) → *die Garderobe* (fem., “cloakroom”), French *polonaise* (fem.) → *die Polonäse* (fem., “polonaise”).

Yet even here, gender assignment is not entirely consistent. When a borrowed word enters into conflict with an established German lexical-semantic system, its gender may shift. This phenomenon is well illustrated by the nouns *die Billion* (“trillion”), *die Million* (“million”), and *die Milliarde* (“billion”), which adopted the feminine gender in contrast to their original masculine gender in French.

This change is likely due to analogy with lexical-semantic fields in German: substantivized numerals follow a feminine paradigm, e.g. *die Eins* (“one”), *die Zwei* (“two”), most probably influenced by the gender of the general term *die Zahl* (“number”). Compare: French *billion* (masc.) → *die Billion* (fem., “trillion”), French *milliard* (masc.) → *die Milliarde* (fem., “billion”), French *million* (masc.) → *die Million* (fem., “million”)^[8].

In the case of borrowings from languages that do not possess grammatical gender, such as English, we observe a similar pattern in the adaptation of nouns by gender in German. If the borrowed word refers to a person of a specific biological sex, it is generally assigned to the corresponding masculine or feminine gender category. For example, English words such as *lady*, *manager*, and *boss* have been assimilated into German as *die Lady* (fem., “lady”), *der Manager* (masc., “manager”), and *der Boss* (masc., “boss”). If English loanwords contain suffixes that resemble native German morphemes, the noun tends to follow the grammatical gender associated with those morphological patterns—as seen in *computer* → *der Computer* (masc., “computer”), *browser* → *der Browser* (masc., “browser”).

However, due to the relative scarcity of derivational morphemes in English, the majority of English words are most likely adapted in German by analogy with lexical-semantic fields: *der Foxtrott* (masc., “foxtrot”) – by analogy with *der Tanz* (masc., “dance”); *der Airport* – by analogy with *der Flughafen* (masc., “airport”); *das Internet* – by analogy with *das Netz* (neut., “network”). The influence of lexical-semantic fields or generic class concepts can be spontaneous and inconsistent, as evidenced by regional variation in gender assignment. For example, while in Standard German used in Germany the term *die E-Mail* (fem., “email”) is feminine—likely due to analogy with *die Post* (“mail”)—in Austrian, Swiss, and southern German dialects, the neuter form *das E-Mail* is also in use. This gender variation reveals a complex — and at first glance seemingly spontaneous — process in which the gender of a general or semantic class is transferred to a new lexical item. Yet it remains difficult to determine exactly at which point and by which mechanism gender assignment was ultimately decided.

In addition, other rules for gender differentiation apply to Anglo-Americanisms. If a borrowing from English is a monosyllabic noun, it tends to be assigned masculine gender in German: *toast* → *der Toast* (masc., “toast”), *lunch* → *der Lunch* (masc., “lunch”), *start* → *der Start* (masc., “start”), *club* → *der Klub* (masc., “club”)^[9].

Thus, the gender assignment of borrowings from genderless languages largely mirrors the processes found in both native German nouns and loanwords from languages with grammatical gender. Depending on prevailing features and “spontaneous” analogy, morphological, semantic, and lexical-

semantic mechanisms are all active.

Although Armenian does not possess grammatical gender and does not serve as a major contributor to the German lexicon, it nevertheless offers an interesting case for analyzing how Armenian realia are adapted in German—a process that can, in turn, shed light on how grammatical gender is attributed.

2. Materials and Methods

The main aim of this article is to identify the patterns by which genderless Armenian nouns are assigned grammatical gender in German. The research is based on descriptive, contrastive, typological, introspective, and logical comparison methods. These approaches enable the collection and analysis of linguistic units within the language system, classifying them according to specific features, meanings, forms, and criteria, and drawing logical conclusions accordingly. The research material consists of travel guides written by German-speaking travelers during their stays in Armenia^[10–13], Armenian writers introducing Armenia to a German-speaking readership^[14,15]. To identify the usage and grammatical gender of Armenian realia in German, we examined freely available relevant entries in the German-language version of Wikipedia and Academic as well. The search was conducted in November 2024 using the internal search function with keywords such as “Lavash”, “Duduk”, “Ghapama”, “Armenische Küche”, and “Armenische Kultur” etc. A total of 40 articles were analyzed. The date of access was November 25, 2024^[16,17].

The corpus also contains works by native German authors, Armenian authors writing in German, and German translations of Armenian poetry created by native German translators in order to improve clarity and allow for a more thorough and impartial examination of grammatical gender^[18–21]. The lexical items studied reflect Armenian cultural realities—including terms related to food, musical instruments, traditional life, architecture, household items, and toponyms—analyzed from the perspective of their gender adaptation in German.

2.1. Definition of Realia

There is no single universally accepted definition of the term realia. For example, E. M. Vereshchagin and V. G.

Kostomarov classify realia as part of non-equivalent vocabulary^[22]. P. Kujamäki defines realia as material objects or political, institutional, social, or geographic concepts that are closely tied to a specific culture^[23], while also serving as markers of national or ethnic cultural identity belonging to a country, region, etc.^[24]. At the same time, there is no universally agreed-upon term for realia, as other designations exist for such vocabulary, including culture-bound items, cultural terms, culture-specific elements, culture markers, and extralinguistic cultural references^[25]. According to S. Vlachov and S. Florin^[26]:

“Realia are words (or word combinations) denoting objects characteristic of the life (everyday life, culture, social and historical development) of one people and unfamiliar to another; being carriers of national and/or historical coloring, they generally lack exact equivalents in other languages and therefore cannot be translated “on common grounds”, requiring instead a special approach”.

In German-language linguistic studies, for example, E. Riesel^[27] classifies realia as part of terminological vocabulary: “In the context of terms, realia should also be mentioned. Whereas terms and professional jargon, as layers of vocabulary, are a lexicological phenomenon, realia must be regarded as stylistic categories”. She characterized realia by objectivity and the authenticity of their source, as they reflect the linguistic and cultural features of a specific nation without expressiveness^[27].

W. Fleischer classifies realia as direct borrowings^[28]. T. Shippin introduces the term ‘Bezeichnungsexotismen’ – exotisms – referring to objects and phenomena specific to the two German states, the GDR and the FRG, between 1949 and 1990^[29]. Later, he associates exotisms with borrowings that can introduce into the text an association with their origin^[30].

Snell-Hornby et al. emphasize the identity-related nature of realia in their definition: “Realia are bearers of the identity of a national or ethnic image, of national or ethnic culture; in a broad sense, they are characteristic of a country, region, or part of the world”^[31].

To summarize the above, realia can be understood as lexical lacunae — words expressing concepts that do not exist in another culture or language, terms referring to culturally specific elements, and words with no equivalents outside the language to which they belong. They are characterized by national and historical connotations.

2.2. Analysis of Armenian Realia in the German Language

Let us consider the grammatical gender of Armenian realia in German. The following **Table 1** includes names of musical instruments, national dishes, beverages, architectural terms, toponyms, certain religious holidays, and other culturally specific concepts and objects typical of Armenian reality, alongside their possible gender assignments in German. The question mark (?) is used in cases where authors do not use an article to express the reality and instead apply a descriptive method to convey the concept.

Table 1. Armenian Realia – Nouns with Grammatical Gender in German.

Musical Instruments		National Dishes	
der, die, das	Duduk	das	Basturma
die	Saz	das	Lawasch
die	Kamangaj, Kamantscha	das, die	Chasch
die, das	Kanun	der	hajkakan Surtsch
die	Oud, Ud	das	Gatha
der	Dam	das	Baklava
die	Schvi	die	Sufschuk
die	Dhol	die	Muraba
die	Zurna/Surna	die, das	Tolma, Dolma
Dances and Songs		die	Spas
der	Kochari	das	Kjufta
der	Jarkhuschta	die, das	Schaschlik
das	Dshan-gjulum	die	Harissa

Table 1. Cont.

Musical Instruments		National Dishes	
National singers		der	Ischkhan
der	Gusan	das	Chorowats/Khorovats
der	Aschug	das	Taboulé
der	Gharib	der	Lori-Käse
der	Katholikos	der	Kanatsch-Käse
der	Jar	der	Tschetschil-Käse
der	Wardapet	die	Boraki
		?	Ghapama
		?	Aveluk
		?	Matsun
Beverages			
die	Karasi		
die	Voskehat		
die	Areni		
das	Alexandropol		
das	Gyumri		
Architectural terms			
der	Pulpulak	?der, das	Karahundsch
der	Chatschkar	?der, das	Vischapakar
das	Zhamatun		
der	Gawit		
der	Gavasan		
das	Matenadaran		
Religious holidays		Other culturally specific concepts	
?	Wardawar	der	Dram
?	Trndez	die	Marschrutka
der	Voghormia	der	Tonir
		der	Mangal
Toponyms			
Rivers			
der	Ararat	der	Aghstew
der	Masis, Massis	der	Khassach
der	Araks, Arax	der	Woghdschi
der	Sevan, Sewan, Sewansee	der	Asat
der	Aragats	der	Dsoraget
der	Worotan	der	Artschigi
der	Hrazdan	der	Masrik
der	Debed	der	Wardenis
der	Arpa	der	Gawaraget
der	Pambak	der	Dsknaget
der	Meghri	der	Vedi
Cities			
(das)	Jerewan, Eriwan	(das)	Goris
(das)	Gjumri	(das)	Eghegnadzor
(das)	Dilijan	(das)	Tsaghkadzor
(das)	Vanadzor	(das)	Gladzor
(das)	Hankawan	(das)	Vagharschapat
(das)	Meghri	(das)	Hrazdan
(das)	Vanadzor	(das)	Stephanavan
(das)	Armavir	(das)	Kadscharan
(das)	Alaverdi	(das)	Dwin
(das)	Tigranakert	(das)	Teghut

Since the translation of realia presents certain difficulties, the examples provided are essentially transliterated forms and, in a way, represent, according to H. Drössiger “a challenge of a special kind; at the same time, they are a vivid expression of the coexistence of the world’s languages and cultures”^[32].

The adaptation of Armenian realia into the German language reveals a complex and, at times, ambiguous pattern, particularly when it comes to grammatical gender assignment. This is because of the structural disparity between Armenian and German: German needs to assign gender to every noun, whereas Armenian has no grammatical gender and gives no morphological and no syntactic basis for such classification. For this reason, when Armenian realia—closely related culture-specific things like food, music, traditional items and practices—are transferred into German, speakers and translators have to use extralinguistic analogies and associations in order to assign a grammatical gender.

Since the meanings of these culturally bound realia often require elaborate explanation or contextual clarification to be fully understood by the German-speaking audience, gender assignment is rarely intuitive. Instead, it occurs in most cases by analogy—either based on the lexical and semantic field to which the realia belongs or by association with a more generic or familiar concept within the German language system. This semantic alignment serves as a functional strategy to integrate unfamiliar terms into the grammatical framework of the target language.

In some instances, the assignment of gender is further complicated by phonological or morphological features, such as word endings or consonant clusters that may sound atypical or unfamiliar to the German ear. Such formal characteristics can lead to instability or fluctuation in gender categorization, especially when no clear semantic parallel is immediately available.

A notable pattern emerges in the domain of musical instruments. Interestingly, all stringed musical instruments of Armenian origin tend to be assigned feminine gender in German. This phenomenon is likely influenced by the feminine German nouns *die Saite* (“string”) and *die Streiche* (“stroke”), both of which are conceptually linked to the operation and function of string instruments. The feminine association reinforces a semantic network in which the object is integrated not in isolation, but through related linguistic and cultural

concepts already embedded in the target language. The noun *der Kanun* (“kanun”) “box zither” appears in the masculine gender, despite the fact that its functional equivalent in German, *die Kastenzither* is feminine. Several factors may account for this discrepancy.

Initially, *Kanun* is a loanword of Arabic origin and does not have an inherent grammatical gender in the source language. In such cases, German often assigns masculine gender by default, particularly when the word ends in a consonant and has no direct native equivalent. Second, *Kanun* phonetically resembles other masculine German nouns of foreign origin, such as *der Kanon* or *der Harun*, which may influence its gender assignment by analogy.

Then, although the *Kanun* is technically a type of box zither (*Kastenzither*), assigning it a different gender might serve to semantically distinguish it from the traditional Alpine instrument *die Zither*, which carries strong local and cultural associations. Finally, masculine usage is already established in musical and lexicographic sources (e.g., *der Kanun* in Wikipedia and musical encyclopedias), which reinforces its acceptance in German-language discourse. At the same time both Armenian authors/translators and native German speakers commonly assign feminine grammatical gender, following patterns of semantic analogy.

However, gender variability is evident in the case of the Armenian wind instrument *duduk*. The term appears in different grammatical forms—*der Duduk*, *die Duduk*, and *das Duduk*—across various sources, indicating a lack of standardization. This fluctuation likely results from multiple analogical influences: *das Musikinstrument* (“musical instrument”, neuter), *das Rohrblatt* (“reed”, neuter), or *die Pfeife*, *die Flöte* (“pipe”/“flute”, feminine). Each analogy may activate a different gender category, depending on which semantic attribute of the *duduk* is foregrounded: its material, its structure, or its musical function. It is noteworthy that some native German-speaking authors associate the instrument with the feminine gender, while others classify it as masculine or neuter. Armenian translators tend to avoid using an article altogether when describing the instrument. Considering that the *duduk* is a type of flute, assigning it a feminine grammatical gender appears semantically logical. On the other hand, in Cwiertnia’s text, the *duduk* is treated as a neuter noun, even though the explanatory phrase used is *die Flöte* (fem.). This suggests that the choice of grammatical

gender is often an individual stylistic decision, regardless of whether the author is a native speaker of German or not.

In the domain of dance, Armenian dance names are generally treated as masculine, following the German model noun *der Tanz* (“dance”, masc.). Conversely, *Dshan-gjulum* is assigned neuter gender, following the general analogy with *das Lied*. This pattern shows a higher degree of regularity and alignment with established German nominal structures.

The situation becomes more nuanced when examining Armenian national dishes. Here, the semantic principle of analogy to food categories plays a dominant role. Most dish names, regardless of their original phonetic form or ending, are adapted as neuter nouns in German. For instance, *das Basturma* “basturma” (air-dried cured meat), *das Schaschlik*, *das Chorowats* “shashlik” (a dish of skewered and grilled meat), *das Tolma* “tolma” (grape or cabbage leaves, or other vegetables like peppers, tomatoes, or eggplants, that are filled with a mixture of meat, rice, and spices), and *das Kjufta* “kyufta” (meatballs or meatloaves) are all treated as neuter. This tendency likely stems from their association with *das Fleisch* (“meat”, neuter), which serves as a generic food category and frames the perception of these dishes as variants or types of meat preparations.

It is noteworthy that the *-a* ending, common in many Armenian nouns (e.g., *Basturma*, *Tolma*, *Muraba*), does not necessarily influence gender assignment in the expected way. In German, the suffix *-a* is often associated with feminine nouns, yet in the case of *das Basturma*, the gender remains neuter. Conversely, *Tolma* is attested both in neuter and feminine forms, indicating a zone of grammatical competition. A parallel can be observed with Russian borrowings in German, where both the lexical item and its original gender are occasionally transferred together, as in *die Wodka* (feminine), despite the fact that its closest German counterpart, *der Schnaps*, is masculine. This highlights the influence of source language gender conventions and their selective transferability into German.

Some Armenian dishes are adapted following other culinary analogies. *Die Chasch* “khash” (boiled cow or sheep parts, primarily the feet and stomach) and *die Spas* “spas” (yogurt soup), for instance, are categorized as feminine, possibly through analogy with *die Suppe* (“soup”, fem.). Nevertheless, *Chasch* also occurs in the neuter form, illustrating once again the flexibility and non-standardized nature of gender

assignment for such items. Though *Chasch* appears with both neuter (*das Chasch*) and feminine (*die Chasch*) forms in German, the neuter gender follows the common pattern of assigning neuter to foreign food terms (e.g., *das Gulasch*), while the feminine form likely arises by analogy to German feminine nouns for soups (*die Suppe*, *die Brühe*). Due to the foreign origin of the word and the lack of a fixed gender, this variety reflects the preferences of individual speakers.

Other food-related realia continue this pattern of semantic-based gendering: *das Lawasch* (“flatbread”) aligns with *das Brot* (“bread”, neuter) or *das Fladenbrot* (“flatbread”, neuter); *das Gatha* “gatha” (pastry or sweet bread) and *das Baklava* “baklava” (dessert made of filo pastry, filled with chopped nuts, and sweetened with syrup or honey) are treated as neuter, most likely by association with *das Gebäck* (“pastry”, neuter). The feminine *die Sufschuk* is linked to *die Wurst* (“sausage”, fem.), while *die Muraba* (“jam”) is paralleled with *die Konfitüre* (“jam”, fem.). Likewise, *die Harissa* (barley porridge with chicken) fits semantically with *die Brühe* (“broth”, fem.). These examples show a consistent semantic modeling, where the grammatical gender is drawn from well-established categories of food types within the German lexicon.

Der Ischkhan (“trout”), a masculine noun, is clearly influenced by *der Fisch* (“fish”, masc.), showing a more straightforward example of biological and semantic mapping.

However, not all cases are as easily explainable. The gender of *das Taboule* (“tabbouleh”) remains unclear or inconsistent, despite its obvious association with *der Salat* (“salad”, masc.). The lack of consensus here may be attributed to unfamiliarity, phonetic form, or the absence of a direct and dominant analogue within German cuisine, reflecting how cultural distance and lexical unfamiliarity contribute to gender uncertainty.

When it comes to animate nouns, particularly those denoting human figures, gender is assigned according to biological sex, in keeping with German linguistic norms. Thus, *der Aschug* and *der Gusan*—referring to male folk singers or poets—are treated as masculine, aligning naturally with their real-world gender reference.

In many of the examined sources, authors frequently resort to explanatory strategies to facilitate the integration of Armenian realia into the German linguistic system. A com-

mon method involves appending a generic category noun to the realia, thereby anchoring it semantically and grammatically within familiar German lexical fields. For instance, Armenian cheeses are often designated using the masculine German noun *der Käse* (“cheese”) as a base, leading to formations such as *der Lori-Käse* (“Lori cheese”), *der Kanatsch-Käse* (“Kanach cheese,” a Roquefort-type blue cheese), and *der Tschetschil-Käse* (“Chechil cheese,” a fibered, stretched variety). Similarly, wine types are introduced as *der Karasi-Wein* (“Karasi winery wine”), reflecting the masculine gender of *der Wein* (“wine”).

Interestingly, the noun *Karasi* can also appear in a different semantic context, taking on the feminine gender *die Karasi* when interpreted as a vessel (jug), most likely influenced by the feminine German noun *die Tonamphore* (“clay amphora”). This shift demonstrates how semantic framing can lead to divergent gender assignments depending on the realia’s perceived function or referent.

In the domain of viticulture, grape varieties such as *Areni* and *Voskehat* are consistently assigned feminine gender, rendered as *die Areni* and *die Voskehat* respectively. This classification seems to be based on the analogy with *die Traube* (“grape”, fem.) or more specifically with *die Weinsorte* (“wine variety”, fem.). Despite the general masculine association of *der Wein*, the categorization here aligns with a more specific semantic subset, further emphasizing the importance of lexico-semantic specificity in gender assignment.

A similar analogical mechanism is at work in the case of beer brands and types, which uniformly adopt the neuter gender in German, reflecting the gender of the generic term *das Bier* (“beer”). Thus, Armenian beer names such as *das Alexandropol*, *das Gjumri*, and *das Kilikia* are consistently integrated as neuter nouns.

In some cases, particularly where the cultural specificity or unfamiliarity of the term is high, authors avoid assigning any gender at all. Instead, the realia are introduced without articles, accompanied by descriptive glosses. Examples include *Ghapama* (“pumpkin stuffed with rice and dried fruits”), *Matsun* (“fermented milk product”), and *Aveluk* (“wild sorrel or dock”). This strategy may reflect a degree of linguistic hesitation or an attempt to preserve the foreignness of the term, thereby refraining from immediate grammatical domestication.

This approach is also observed with names of traditional folk or religious holidays, such as *Wardawar* (celebration of the Transfiguration, observed 14 weeks after Easter) and *Trndez* (Presentation of the Lord). These are typically introduced descriptively, without definite articles or overt gender assignment, possibly due to the lack of a directly equivalent or generic term in German that could determine gender.

In contrast, for architectural and cultural-historical realia, gender assignment again follows a semantic analogy with known German equivalents. The Armenian *Chatschkar* (“cross-stone”) is rendered as *der Chatschkar*, by analogy with *der Kreuzstein* (“cross-stone”, masc.). Similarly, *Zhamatun* (“chapel annex”) is classified as *das Zhamatun*, following the neuter *das Haus* (“house”). The *Gawit* (“narthex” or vestibule of a church) appears as *der Gawit* or *die Vorhalle / der Nartex*, depending on the interpretative focus.

Holidays are typically used without grammatical gender; however, the prayer *der Voghormia* is treated as masculine - perhaps because it functions as a direct address to God (e.g., “Gott, erbarme dich”).

The gender assignment of *Karahundscho* (“megalithic site, often called the Armenian Stonehenge”) and *Vischapakar* (“dragon stones,” i.e., dragon-shaped megaliths) varies between *der* and *das*, though in most cases *der Stein* (“stone”, masc.) serves as the basis for masculine assignment. Other architectural and cultural items follow similar patterns: *der Gavasan* (“staff”) is linked to *der Stab*, *das Matenadaran* (“repository of manuscripts”) is paralleled with *das Aufbewahrungshaus* or *das Handschriftenmuseum* (both neuter), and *der Tonir* (“traditional clay oven”) aligns with *der Ofen* (“oven”, masc.).

The same rationale applies to *der Pulpulak* (“public drinking fountain”) as an analogue to *der Trinkbrunnen*, and *der Dram* (“Armenian currency unit”) as an equivalent to *der Euro*. Even vehicles, such as the minibus *Marschrutka*, tend to follow gender assignment based on morphological appearance or semantic analogy. Despite its similarity to *der Minibus*, the noun *Marschrutka* is often treated as feminine, likely influenced by its Slavic *-a* ending, commonly associated with feminine gender in German borrowings.

Since a *Mangal* functions like a portable grill, German speakers naturally analogize it to *der Grill* (masculine),

reinforcing its masculine assignment.

As for toponyms, the treatment of Armenian place names in German aligns with the general grammatical rules for geographical names. Names of cities and villages such as *Mush*, *Artaschat*, *Vanadzor*, and *Jerewan* are used in the neuter form without an article, in accordance with standard German practice for city names. Conversely, names of rivers are assigned the masculine gender, by analogy with the masculine noun *der Fluss* (“river”). Thus, *der Arax*, *der Vedi*, and *der Pambak* are all treated as masculine, illustrating a consistent and predictable pattern within this lexical field.

3. Conclusions

The analysis of Armenian realia and their adaptation into the German language with regard to grammatical gender allows for several important conclusions. Firstly, the inherent absence of grammatical gender in Armenian presents a unique challenge when these realia are transferred into German, a language where gender is a core grammatical category. Due to the lack of gender-specific suffixes in Armenian and the structural incompatibility between the two linguistic systems, gender assignment in German is largely spontaneous and context-dependent.

In most cases, this assignment follows semantic principles, whereby the meaning of the Armenian realia is interpreted through analogy with a generic concept or integrated into an existing lexico-semantic field in German. For instance, if an Armenian term denotes an object, concept, or institution that has a clear gender equivalent in German, the realia tend to adopt that gender by association.

From this perspective, the adaptation of Armenian realia into German can be compared to the assimilation process of nouns borrowed from genderless languages, such as English. In both cases, the assignment of grammatical gender largely depends on semantic interpretation rather than fixed morphological markers. This means that the meaning and cultural context of the borrowed term play a crucial role in determining its gender in German. However, a key difference lies in the treatment of articles. Loanwords borrowed from English are generally integrated into German with the use of definite or indefinite articles, which help signal their grammatical gender explicitly. In contrast, Armenian realia

are often introduced with explanatory phrases instead of articles, reflecting a different strategy in how these culturally specific terms are incorporated and explained within German discourse. This difference may stem from the relative unfamiliarity of Armenian concepts to the German-speaking audience, requiring more contextualization.

All things taken into account, this comparison demonstrates how German adjusts foreign nouns according to cultural considerations and communication demands in addition to linguistic structure, particularly when interacting with less well-known or culturally unique terminology.

While there is some variability in gender assignment, these fluctuations are generally minor and can be attributed to the subjective interpretation of the translator or the German-speaking author. Their mental associations with similar or equivalent terms in German likely influence the choice of grammatical gender. In certain instances, morphological features, such as phonetic endings or suffixes that resemble gender markers in German, can further sway gender classification. The distribution of gender does not depend on the author’s status - on whether the authors are native speakers or Armenian translators; in this respect, the variation appears to be random.

Overall, the study confirms that semantic analogy—either through generic categorization, synonymy, or thematic association—is the dominant strategy in the gender adaptation of Armenian realia into German. This process reflects not only linguistic but also cognitive and cultural dimensions, highlighting the dynamic nature of translation and the interpreter’s role in navigating structural differences between languages. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of how gender is negotiated across linguistic boundaries, especially in cases involving typologically diverse language pairs such as Armenian and German.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, G.S. and M.Y.; methodology, G.S.; formal analysis, M.Y.; investigation, G.S. and M.Y.; resources, G.S.; data curation, G.S.; writing—original draft preparation, G.S. and M.Y.; writing—review and editing, M.Y.; visualization, M.Y.; supervision, S.G. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

This work received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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