Polysemy in the Structure of Nominal Nouns in the Kazakh Language

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Abstract
A linguistic analysis of lexico-semantic phenomenon of polysemy, focuses on its internal structure and interpretative mechanisms. It critically explores the identification of core meanings, underlying causal relationships, and the structural aspects of semantic connections. The study aims to outline the complexities of motivational links in language, their underlying foundations, and the polysemous structure of meaning itself, alongside the similarities and differences across semantic groupings. The qualitative, descriptive-analytical research design integrates componential analysis, etymological and ethnolinguistic approaches, enabling a multi-layered understanding of semantic structures of polysemous nominal nouns sampled from the Kazakh language. A functional-semantic framework, combining diachronic and synchronic perspectives, was used to analyze the sampled polysemous nominal nouns. As a result, the study identifies the motivational links and semantic foundations of polysemous nouns, delineating key similarities and differences across semantic groupings. The findings contribute to a more structured and theoretically grounded framework for analyzing polysemy within Turkic languages Limitations include the focus on nominal nouns and exclusion of verbs or adjectives. Recommendations are made for extending the analysis to other word classes and for applying the results in lexicography and language education.

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Introduction

Polysemous nouns function in different syntactic and communicative contexts. Ufimtseva & Balyasnikova (2019) assert that polysemy typically arises for two main reasons: the transfer of meaning from one referent to another based on similarity; and the lexical economy of a language, where a limited vocabulary must address an expanding set of referents. These mechanisms not only explain the structure of polysemy but also reflect its nominative potential – the capacity of a word to name multiple phenomena while maintaining semantic integrity. As a result, a single lexeme may serve as the name for several different objects, thereby giving rise to multiple meanings and forming a complex semantic structure. Accordingly, beyond its core (primary) meaning, a word may develop derived, figurative, contextually differentiated, and dialectal meanings. Since each of these meanings refers to a distinct object, it carries nominative (naming) value. Within the framework of linguistic nomination theory, this gives rise to the distinction between primary and secondary types of naming (Ufimtseva & Balyasnikova, 2019).

One of the central challenges in the historiography of Kazakh grammar is the integration of historical and contemporary semantics into a unified analytical framework. A particularly salient phenomenon in this regard is polysemy – the presence of multiple meanings within a single lexical unit – which is characteristic of all natural languages. In the Kazakh language, polysemy frequently overlaps with related phenomena such as homonymy and conversion, but unlike these, polysemous words share a common phonetic and grammatical form while differing in meaning. Although the semantic structure of polysemy is typically classified into primary, derived, figurative, contextually differentiated, and dialectal meanings, the precise criteria for such classifications remain undefined (Abaev, 1957). This absence of clear classification underscores the need for a more refined semantic investigation within the Kazakh linguistic tradition.

In the context of the Kazakh language, too, there are insufficiently defined classification criteria for polysemous meanings – such as primary, derived, contextual, qualitative, and dialectal – despite frequent discussion of related phenomena like homonymy and conversion. This lack of clarity necessitates a comprehensive approach to systematize and categorize semantic variations. There is a need to identify the nominative value and to understand the nature of polysemy as a linguistic phenomenon. It is essential to explore its underlying causes, its semantic structure, the nominative potential of its semantic units, as well as the principal criteria for their classification into types and forms. It is also necessary to examine the relationships and distinctions among these types from the perspective of motivational theory, and to systematize the semantic derivation of selected lexical units at a diachronic level.

The current study therefore discusses polysemy as a lexico-semantic phenomenon. It analyzes the semantic structure of polysemous nominal nouns in the Kazakh language and the motivational mechanisms that drive the emergence of multiple meanings. The aim of the study was to establish a systematic, theoretically grounded classification of meanings in polysemous nouns, based on motivational connections and semantic structure. To achieve this aim, the study addresses the following research objectives: (i) to distinguish polysemy from related phenomena such as homonymy, conversion, and paronymy; (ii) to classify the types of meanings (primary, derivative, figurative, dialectal, specialized) within polysemous lexical structures; (iii) to analyze the semantic and motivational links among these meanings; (iv) to examine the causal, structural, and analogical mechanisms behind meaning extension; (v) and to systematize these findings using componential, etymological, and ethnolinguistic methods. To this end, the study addresses the following research problem: (1) How can the semantic structure of polysemous nominal nouns in Kazakh be systematically classified based on motivational connections, and what typological patterns emerge from such an analysis?

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations of Semantics

The exploration of Kazakh grammar through the lens of semasiology, an early term for the study of meaning, has historical roots in European linguistic scholarship. The term semasiology was first introduced by German scholar Reising in 1839, while the term semantics was later incorporated into linguistic discourse by French linguist Bréal in 1904. Over time, the concept of semantics expanded significantly, evolving into an umbrella term that encompasses multiple academic disciplines. According to Serebrennikov & Ufimceva (1977), four principal branches of semantics have emerged: linguistic semantics, logical semantics, philosophical semantics, and general semantics. Saparova (2025) further refined this classification by distinguishing between linguistic and non-linguistic semantics – a framework that continues to shape contemporary semantic research.

Building on these foundational classifications, the study of polysemy, a central issue in lexical semantics, has long been a focal point of semantic inquiry. Gak (1976, 1977) distinguishes two fundamental types of meaning: primary and secondary. The primary meaning refers to the core or base sense of a word, while secondary meanings encompass derived, figurative, contextually conditioned, and dialectal uses. This distinction is crucial for understanding the dynamic, layered nature of word meaning across different contexts.

Early writers like (Apresjan, 1974; Coseriu & Geckeler, 1974; Silverstein, 1972) contributed a comprehensive framework for linguistics and semantics focusing on lexical meaning analysis, and emphasizing the role of systemic relationships among word senses and semantic components. As the field continued to evolve, especially from the 1980s onward, linguistic semantics diversified into various subfields, including phonemic, lexical, morphemic (both primary and secondary), phrase, sentence, paragraph, and text semantics (Allwood, Nivre, & Ahlsén, 1992; Bittner, 1994; Carston, 2008; Raskin, 1994). These subfields reflect an emphasis on the content dimension of linguistic units and provide foundational tools for detailed semantic analysis. Recent works on semasiology (Gulnazarova, 2020; Kasimova, Baxramov, & Tuxtasinov, 2025; Saparova, 2025) have underscored the conventional semantic classifications such as auto-semantic vs. syn-semantic words, and addressed the motivational links that drive semantic extension, which remain relevant for present-day studies of polysemy. These subfields of lexical semantics investigate the structure and meaning of words.

Lexical Semantics and Historical Perspectives

Lexical semantics has been shaped significantly by the work of 19th- and early 20th-century lexicographers and linguists, including French linguists like Michel Jules Alfred Bréal, James Darmesteter, and Antoine Meillet; Ukrainian linguist Leonid Bulakhovsky; Polish scholars like Witold Doroszewski; Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure; and Austrian scholar Hugo Schuchardt. Their contributions have laid the theoretical foundation for modern approaches to semantic change and lexical structure. Further development occurred within the Russian linguistic tradition, where scholars such as Alpatov (2014), Karlinsky (2007), Levitskiy (2021), Chen & Stepanov (2024) and Ufimtseva & Balyasnikova (2019) expanded on earlier semantic models. Vorkachev & Vorkacheva (2020) presented a theoretical model linking polysemy with context-driven semantic shifts. Their work incorporates structuralist, functionalist, and cognitive approaches, enriching the theoretical framework for lexical semantic research.

Foundations of Kazakh Semantic Studies

In parallel, Kazakh and Turkological linguistics have significantly contributed to the field of lexical semantics, particularly in analyzing semantic phenomena within the Kazakh language. Some of the foundational works laid the groundwork for contemporary research. Adishirin (2019), Zhambylkyzy & Husaynov (2017) and Mamadiyarova et al. (2024) have emphasized ethnolinguistic perspectives, exploring how culturally embedded categories shape structural semantic and functional features of phrasal verbs in English and Kazakh language. Their studies highlighted the importance of worldview and traditional knowledge systems in semantic categorization. Karagulova & Ali (2022) focused on logical semantics units in Kazakh, refining the theoretical understanding of meaning relations through formal semantic structures. Their work contributed to the internal classification of semantic types and interrelations within Kazakh lexical systems.

In recent years, Pashan (2022), Abisheva et al. (2023), and Rysbergen, Pashan, & Gabitkhanuly (2025) have explored polysemy through a cognitive-semantic and ethno- semantic lens. Their works have examined how minimal linguistic forms, conceptual structures, and culturally embedded naming practices contribute to the layering of meaning within Kazakh vocabulary. Other studies (Abasilov & Kapalbek, 2024; Nessipbay & Abikenova, 2024; Rakhimova, Turarbek, & Kopbosyn, 2021; Salkynbay & Suleimenova, 2018) have focused on hybridization and lexical innovation in modern Kazakh, and the formation of functional and semantic stability of derivative words of the Kazakh language. These studies show how borrowed and technical terms undergo semantic expansion and structural assimilation, contributing to polysemy through morpho-semantic mechanisms. Similarly, Taşbaş (2019), Kenzhalin & Yermekbayeva (2022), and Zhalmakhanov, Zhussipbek, & Zhartybaev (2023) have approached semantic analysis from a comparative and areal perspective, highlighting shared lexico-semantic patterns across Turkic languages and the influence of linguistic contact on polysemy.

Abasilov & Kapalbek (2024) examined polysemy in the context of sociolinguistic change, emphasizing how ideological and institutional forces shape semantic variation in modern Kazakh. Collectively, these studies trace the evolution of semantic research in Kazakh linguistics – from early ethnolinguistic inquiry and formal semantic theory to contemporary approaches. These contributions not only chronicle the intellectual trajectory of semantic research in Kazakh linguistics but also provide essential theoretical and methodological tools for analyzing the motivational and structural aspects of polysemy, which this study aims to synthesize and extend.

Methodology

Research Design

This study is grounded in a qualitative, descriptive-analytical research design, aiming to examine the semantic structure of polysemous nominal nouns in the Kazakh language through the lens of lexical semantics

and motivational theory. The research adopts a functional-semantic framework, combining diachronic and synchronic perspectives to analyze the formation and classification of primary and secondary meanings. The study also draws on the theory of linguistic nomination and principles of polysemous development to establish a systematic typology of meanings based on motivational connections.

Sampling and Data Collection

The corpus of analysis consisted of a representative selection of polysemous nominal nouns in the Kazakh language, covering various syntactic and communicative contexts. These lexical items were extracted from the ten-volume *Explanatory Dictionary of the Kazakh Language* (Zhanuzakov, 2008), latest ethnolinguistic sources (Muratbek, 2023; Rysbergen et al., 2025; Sarekenova & Mukhtarova, 2024), and examples of oral and written discourse and literary texts (Beskempirova, Tamaev, & Adieva, 2023; Kuderinova, 2019) and idiomatic expressions, proverbs, and regional usage. The sample included words with primary, derived, figurative, contextual, and dialectal meanings, as well as lexemes exhibiting specialized or terminological uses. The selection criteria were based on semantic richness, frequency of use, and representativeness across dialectal and literary varieties.

Data Analysis

The study employed several complementary methods for analyzing the data. Componential analysis was used to isolate and compare semantic units (semes) within each polysemous word, identifying arch semes, integral semes, and differential semes (Gak, 1976, 1977; Muratbek, 2023). Lexical-semantic, lexical-thematic, and lexical-grammatical group analysis enabled classification of meanings into functional categories. Etymological analysis traced the historical development of words and identifies core meanings and derivational pathways. Ethnolinguistic analysis contextualized semantic shifts within cultural practices, traditional worldview, and symbolic associations. Motivational typology was applied to determine the nature of semantic connections: parallel, sequential, or mixed motivational links between meanings. The data was further structured according to motivational models of polysemy, with examples categorized by type of motivation (e.g., material, functional, spatial, color-based). A set of diagnostic criteria – including contextual independence, synchronic/diachronic transparency, and cultural markedness – is used to distinguish between types of meaning (e.g., primary, derived, figurative, dialectal, and specialized).

Results

In order to determine the nominative value of the semantic structure of polysemy, it is essential to achieve certain theoretical, methodological, and practical outcomes. This involves analyzing the distinguishing features of polysemy in comparison to similar phenomena, examining the motivational relationships and types of polysemy, as well as different types of meanings within its semantic structure. It is necessary to explore the similarities and differences between these meanings using various linguistic research methods. These approaches provide a clearer understanding of the nature of polysemy and its significance within the broader linguistic system.

To begin with, it is necessary to distinguish the features of polysemy from those of homonymy, conversion, and paronymy. To comply with this plan, right at the outset, we analyzed the types of meanings within the semantic structure of polysemous words, identifying their semantic and motivational connections, and exploring their internal content relationships. The distinction between polysemy, homonymy, conversion, and paronymy was based on a set of diagnostic criteria, including written form, etymological origin, pronunciation, auditory perception, grammatical category, and semantic function (see Table 1). These criteria provide a structured framework for identifying overlaps and divergences among these phenomena, thereby contributing to a more precise understanding of the role of polysemy within the broader system of lexical semantics.

Table 1: *Similarities and Differences between Polysemy and Comparable Linguistic Phenomena.*

Conditions / Types	Polysemy	Conversion	Homonymy	Paronymy
Spelling	identical	identical	homophones - identical, homographs - different	different
Origin	same	same	different	different
Reproduction (speaking)	identical	identical	homophones - identical, homographs - different	similar
Hearing (perception by ear)	identical	identical	identical	similar
Relation to part of speech	from one part of speech	from different parts of speech	from both one and different parts of speech	from both one and different parts of speech
Meaning	different	different	different	different
Examples	Ай, ай (Ai, ai) [moon, oh!]	көш – көш (köş – köş) [move – migration]		

The Motivational Relationship of a Polysemous Word, its Origin, and Method

The relationship between the primary meaning of a word and its subsequent meanings, including derived, figurative, metaphorical, and dialectical meanings, is based on a specific motivation or sign (sema). Motivation (motive) refers to the content-semantic origin of the word, which links lexemes with a common phonetic structure through identifiable semantic components: arch seme, integral seme, and differential seme (Muratbek, 2023). Gak (1976, 1977) classifies semes into three types: (1) arch seme – the original object designation, (2) differentiating seme – the distinguishing feature, and (3) integral seme – the connecting feature.

The subsequent meanings of polysemous words are linked to various types of semantic markers, such as accidental, probable, primary, auxiliary, individual, and general connecting markers. The theory of denotation (naming) explores these semantic connections and characteristics, clarifying their causal mechanisms. The motivational aspect of the semantic structure of polysemy can be clarified through illustrations. For example, the Kazakh word *жарғақ* (jarğaq) demonstrates a complex motivational structure involving material, typological, and visual (colour and form) features. The term has various meanings including: (i) A piece of leather made from goat or foal skin, used for tailoring outerwear (*primary meaning – material motivation*). (ii) Leather turned inside out for sewing purposes (*typological motivation*). (iii) An item made from tanned leather used to store belongings (*typological motivation*). (iv) A thin, flexible leather strip used to protect a bird's joints from the cold (*form- and colour-based motivation*). (v) The leather sole of a shoe (*form- and material-based motivation*).

Each of these meanings is semantically derived through specific motivational links. While the first meaning serves as the base, the second and third are connected by typological features, and the fourth and fifth are linked by visual and functional characteristics. These relationships illustrate how polysemous meanings evolve through various motivational pathways, grounded in observable attributes such as material, use, shape, and sensory perception. The motivational relationships (integral semes) between components of a polysemous word's semantic structure can vary considerably. Based on the analysis of polysemous lexemes in Kazakh, semantic motivation was grouped into simple and complex categories.

Simple Motivations

Simple motivations involve meanings that are connected through a single motivating factor. For example, the term *адырна* (adyrna), originally referring to the taut leather string of a bow, later came to denote a musical instrument based on the sound produced by the bowstring – demonstrating a phonetic motivation. Similarly, the bird's name *көкек* (kökek) is linked to the month of April, as this is when the bird typically arrives; hence, the popular Kazakh name for April, *көкек*, is motivated by temporal association. The naming of the felt covering used to wrap a camel's *қом* (qom) (the fatty ridge joining the base of the camel's humps) is an example of locative motivation, as it is based on the object's spatial relation to the animal's anatomy. Another term, *қылыш* (qylyş), which also refers to a wooden tool used in weaving to tighten the weft, is linked through formal (shape-based) motivation, due to the visual similarity between the two objects.

The word *шымылдық* (şymyldyq), originally denoting a curtain used to enclose a sleeping area, extends to refer to a stage curtain, illustrating semantic transfer based on functional similarity. Likewise, the word *балдақ* (baldaq), which initially described a crutch used by individuals with mobility impairments, also denotes a forked support used to carry hunting birds, indicating functional motivation underlying the semantic shift. The term *sugar* (in Kazakh, *құмшекер* (qūmşeker) derives its name through gustatory motivation, with its semantic extension referring to sweetness and pleasant flavour. The word *жұпар* (jūpar), referring to a green, aromatic, hairy snake found in mountainous regions, is semantically linked through olfactory motivation, highlighting its strong scent. Similarly, the name of a particular type of foodstuff, *сірне* (sirne), extends semantically to the term for a viscous substance found in plants and animals due to visual resemblance, representing a form-based (colour and consistency) motivation.

The word *қырау* (qyrau), which denotes moisture in the air that settles in a frost-like white form, is also applied metaphorically to the greying of a person's beard or temples, based on colour-based (visual) motivation. Another term, *ішек* (ışek) – intestine – straightforwardly retains its anatomical referent as an organ within an animal's digestive system. Since strings are made from sinew, which in turn is derived from animal intestines, the naming of dombyra strings reflects a genealogical (material-source-based) motivation. The term *үкі* (ükı) is used not only to refer to the bird itself, but also to the soft, fluffy feather adornment traditionally attached to headwear, which falls under material-based motivation. Similarly, a specific type of fabric used to make flags and banners is named for its material properties, demonstrating the same kind of motivation. The word *зымыран* (zymyran), used as a translation equivalent for the term *missile* or *rocket*, is metaphorically linked to a fast and agile bird, indicating dynamic (motion-based) motivation. In a similar vein, *көбелек* (köbelek) and *қаңбақ* (qañbaq) are used to describe frivolous or flighty individuals, again drawing from movement-related associations. The term *әңгі* (äñgı), which denotes a male donkey, is used metaphorically to describe a person who is stubborn or eccentric, exemplifying behavioural motivation. *Бәйтөбет* (bäitöbet), originally a reference to a large watchdog, is metaphorically extended to describe an adult with odd or inappropriate behaviour. Likewise, *бәйшешек* (bäişeşek), the name of an early spring flower, is used symbolically for young children or youth, representing age-based motivation.

All these examples of polysemantic lexemes exhibit integral semantics across various categories. These categories reflect how different types of meanings—such as functional, material, spatial, and evaluative—are systematically combined within a single lexical unit. Table 2 presents a structured overview of polysemantic lexemes grouped according to integral semantic categories, illustrating the operation of simple motivational mechanisms in lexical meaning development.

Table 2: *Examples of Simple Motivational Relationships in Polysemantic Lexemes in Kazakh.*

Category	Lexeme(s)	Explanation(s)
Phonetic	адырна (adyrna)	1. Back side of a quiver 2. Musical instrument
Temporal	көкек (kökek)	1. Species of bird 2. Name of a spring month
Spatial	қом (qom) тамақ (tamaq)	1. Camel hump fat 2. Felted wool made into a rug 1. Front part of the neck, beneath the chin 2. Food
Form-related	қылыш (qylyş)	1. Cold weapon 2. Wooden tool for tightening nets
Functional	шымылдық (şymyldyq) балдақ (baldaq)	1. Bed curtain 2. Decorative stage curtain 1. Crutch for a disabled person 2. Detachable support used to carry hunting birds
Taste-related	құмшекер (qūmşeker)	1. Granulated sugar 2. Pleasant taste or sweetness
Olfactory	жұпар (jūpar)	1. Green-coloured, fragrant fluffy snake 2. Quality of smell
Colour-related	сірне (sirne)	1. Type of food 2. Fluid in living cells
Kind-related	ішек (ışek)	1. Organ of digestion, intestine 2. String part of dombra
Material	үкі (ükı) байрақ (bairaq)	1. Bird 2. Owl feathers which are used in headwear 1. Fabric, cloth 2. Banner, flag
Motion-related	зымыран (zymyran) көбелек (köbelek) қаңбақ (qañbaq)	1. Rocket 2. Bird 1. Butterfly 2. frivolity, a scatterbrained person 1. Light tumbleweed plant 2. Person of frivolous or loose behavior
Behavioral	әңгі (äñgı)	1. Bray of donkey 2. Foolish or rude person
Weight & Measurement	безбен (bezben)	1. Scale, measure of weight 2. Thoughtfulness or mental balance
Ability & Qualitative	әбжылан (äbjylan) азбан (azban)	1. Snake 2. Cruel person 1. Stunted male animal 2. Thin-chested person
Age-related	бәйтөбет (bäitöbet) бота (*bota*) бәйшешек (bäişeşek)	1. Hunting dog 2. Adult's boisterous behavior 1. Camel calf 2. Sweetheart (for children) 1. First spring flower 2. Youthful vigor

Complex Motivations

Complex motivation refers to the phenomenon in which various meanings within the semantic structure of a polysemous word are linked to the primary meaning through multiple motivational factors. For example, the word *орамал* (oramal), which can mean both "headscarf" and "towel" is semantically connected to its core meaning through shape and material-based motivations. The word *қоңырау* (qoñyrau), denoting both a sound-producing device and a segment on a clock, exhibits both functional and auditory motivation. Similarly, the component of a traditional Kazakh yurt and the roof beam of a house, both referred to as *сырғауыл* (syrğauyl), are linked through shape and functional motivations. The term *көмір* (kömir), referring to both coal and partially extinguished embers of wood, involves colour-based and functional motivations. The word *балапан* (balapan), meaning both

"young bird" and "child" as a term of endearment, is motivated by shape and movement. Lastly, the word *кілем* (kilem), used for both "carpet" and a "sports mat", is connected through material and locational motivations.

These examples illustrate complex motivation in polysemous nouns, where the extended meanings arise through a combination of multiple semantic factors such as shape, material, function, location, movement, sound, and more. The concept of motivation in terminology can be classified into three main types: formal motivation, semantic motivation, and motivational analogy (Kandelaki, 1977). These types of motivation also apply to polysemous nouns, whose semantic structures demonstrate layered meanings. For example, the Kazakh word *қолтық* (qoltyq), which primary meaning is "armpit" or "the area where the arm joins the body" in animals and humans, has been extended into specialized meanings in the domain of geography. In this context, *қолтық* denotes: a sheltered or secluded area such as a forested or mountainous recess, or a narrow inlet or bay where the ocean, sea, or lake extends inland (Zhanuzakov, 2008). This shift from the anatomical to the geographical meaning is governed by formal motivation, based on similarity in shape and spatial configuration.

Similarly, the word *әдіп* (ädip), whose original meaning is "a decorative edging or fold in clothing", has acquired a technical sense – "allowance" or "seam margin" in tailoring. This is an instance of motivational analogy, where the transfer of meaning is guided by functional similarity. In another example, the term *бөлтірік* (böltirik), which originally means "wolf cub", has acquired a specialized meaning "a poisonous plant". This extension is based on semantic motivation, likely due to shared connotations of danger or toxicity. Each of these examples illustrates how terminological meanings can evolve from core meanings through different types of motivation – formal resemblance, conceptual similarity, or functional analogy – which are central to the study of semantic structure in polysemous nouns.

Polysemous words exhibit distinct mechanisms of motivational relationships. This is because the connections between the primary (basic) meaning and its subsequent meanings – whether derived, figurative, specialized, or dialectal – can vary considerably in nature. When comparing these semantic connections to those found in complex sentences with multiple subordinate clauses in Kazakh syntax, a notable structural parallel emerges. In such sentences, subordinate components are linked to the main clause in ways that reflect the semantic dependencies observed between the primary and extended meanings of polysemous words. Table 3 exemplifies complex motivational relationships in polysemous Kazakh nouns.

Table 3: *Examples of Complex Motivational Relationships in Polysemous Kazakh Nouns.*

Motivational Factors	Lexeme	Primary Meaning	Extended Meaning
Shape, Material	орамал (oramal)	Headscarf	Towel
Sound, Function	қоңырау (qoñyrau)	Bell	Clock segment
Shape, Function	сырғауыл (syrǧauyl)	Yurt pole	Roof beam
Colour, Function	көмір (kömir)	Coal	Wood ember
Shape, Movement	балапан (balapan)	Chick (young bird)	Child (term of endearment)
Material, Location	кілем (kilem)	Carpet	Sports mat
Shape, Spatial layout	қолтық (qoltyq)	Armpit	Bay / Inlet
Functional similarity	әдіп (ädip)	Clothing fold	Seam margin (tailoring)
Danger / Threat connotation	бөлтірік (böltirik)	Wolf cub	Poisonous plant

Motivational Mechanisms in the Semantic Structure of Polysemous Words

Building on the classification of simple and complex motivations, this section further explores the structural organization of semantic relationships through motivational typologies of polysemy. Scholars have classified these motivational mechanisms in several ways. For instance, the Kazakh linguist Sadykbekov identifies two main types: competing and gradational (Sadykbekov, 1973). Similarly, Russian linguists such as Katznelson and Beloshapkova offer comparable classifications: Katsnelson (2025) describes the relationships as parallel and subordinate, while Beloshapkova (1977) distinguishes between radial (competing), chain (gradational), and radial-chain (competing-gradational) models. These classifications highlight the complexity and diversity of semantic evolution in polysemous words, reflecting how meaning extensions are cognitively and structurally organized in both lexicon and syntax.

In the structure of polysemy, semantic relationships between meanings may develop through parallel, sequential, parallel-sequential, or equal-level motivational patterns. The equal-level connection is characteristic only of words with two distinct meanings. For example, the word *қылыш* (qylyş) holds two primary senses: (1) a weapon, and (2) a wooden tool used to tighten the weft in weaving. Since both meanings are of equal status and independent from one another, they are linked through an equal-level motivational relationship, typical of two-meaning polysemes. In contrast, the Kazakh word *құрай* (qurai) originally denotes a type of plant. From this base meaning, two secondary meanings – (1) a musical instrument made from reed and (2) the glass part of a lamp – are derived directly. These meanings are connected to the root meaning via a parallel motivational pathway, as both are formed independently but concurrently.

Table 4: *Polysemy Types in the Kazakh Language.*

	3-meaning polysemy		
Ноқат (Noqat)	Point Harvest	*Сүмелек* (Sümelek) (a type of food)	Icicle Scoundrel
4-meaning polysemy			
Алақан (Alaqan)	Leaf, middle part of a stem Leather strap of a whip Both ends of a scarf	*Құралай* (Qūralai)	Fawn Name of a method Loveliness
5-meaning polysemy			
Қияқ (Qiaq)	Bird feather Type of leaves Upward-curling tips of a moustache Bow of the kobyz	*Сүңгі* (Süñgi)	Rifle bayonet Dust, pollen, soot deposit, trace Ice droplet Fishing instrument
6-meaning polysemy			
Құлақ (Qūlaq)	Part of a headdress Handle of an object Part of a musical instrument Gully or ravine Protruding shelf from a boat for oar fixation	*Ебелек* (Ebelek)	Helplessness Clumsy person Type of pattern Physical term Blades of a combine harvester
7-meaning polysemy			
Мойнақ (Moinaq)	Skin at the base of a camel's neck Camel skin used for the braided part of a whip Flat summit of a mountain Camel Neck of a ventilation shaft Container for dairy beverages	*Қанат* (Qanat)	Part of a fish's body Airplane wing Car timber frame Walls of a yurt Settlement boundary Railing, support
8-meaning polysemy			
Қыр (Qyr)	Fold of clothing Mathematical term Untapped ability Skill, manoeuvrability Negative trait, prideful character District of a populated area Edge, side of an object		
9-meaning polysemy			
Көз (Köz)	Potato sprouts Needle eye Kerege (yurt wall) or cage opening Spring source Type of jewellery, ornament Administrative term, reserve The object itself Mineral deposit		
10-meaning polysemy			
Жол (Jol)	Written line of speech Road, long journey Direction, route Traditions, customs Turn, sequence Trick, approach Opportunity, potential Solutions, ways of resolving something This, that, it		
11-meaning polysemy			
Бас (Bas)	Sharp part of a tool Loaded spindle Person Number of livestock Top part of an object Particle, fragment of a substance Beginning of a story, event Mind, thought Leader, chief		
Polysemy consisting of 4 meanings, connected through a parallel-sequential method			
Білезік (Bilezik)	Adornment Ankle joint of a bird Relief on the surface of an object		

Another example is the word *қарқара* (qarqara), which in its original meaning refers to a species of bird.

Over time, it came to denote (1) a decorative feather ornament made from the bird's plumage, and (2) a traditional headdress adorned with such feathers. The transition from "bird" to "headdress" is not direct but occurs through the intermediate concept of "ornament". This layered development represents a sequential motivational connection. The word *берен* (beren) provides a more complex case, featuring four distinct meanings: (1) armor made of steel worn by warriors (the primary meaning), (2) a long-barreled flintlock gun, (3) a steel knife, and (4) metaphorically, sharpness or valor. All meanings are united by the common motivational element of steel as the underlying semantic thread. However, the structure of their connections is parallel-sequential: the first two meanings relate through material similarity (both are made of steel), establishing a parallel relationship. The metaphorical fourth meaning is linked via the intermediate notion of a "sharp knife", forming a sequential relationship.

In summary, the parallel, sequential, and parallel-sequential motivational types are typically found in polysemous words with at least three meanings. Polysemic structures involving parallel motivation may comprise anywhere from three to eleven distinct meanings, illustrating a rich and layered system of semantic development. Based on the classification of motivational mechanisms described above, Table 4 provides a visual overview of polysemous words and their semantic structures. The interrelation, distinctions, and specific characteristics of the different meanings within a polysemous word, as well as their motivational connections and the unique mechanisms by which these connections are established, can only be clearly identified through systematic analysis based on established methodological approaches.

Types of Lexical Meanings in Polysemous Words

To better understand the semantic outcomes of motivational processes in polysemous nouns, it is essential to distinguish between different types of lexical meanings. These meanings can be classified according to their degree of motivation, semantic stability, context dependence, and domain specificity. There exist at least five types of lexical meanings of Kazakh polysemous nouns viz., Primary, Derivative, Figurative, Specialized and Dialectal. The first type, the *Primary meaning,* is the historically original, unmotivated meaning of a word. It is semantically stable, context-independent, and auto-semantic. Primary meanings are widely used in general communication and typically carry national-cultural markedness. The second type, *Derivative meaning,* is secondarily motivated and etymologically traceable to the primary. It remains semantically stable and can function outside of context, qualifying it as auto-semantic. Like primary meanings, derivative meanings are widely understood and often nationally specific. The third type, *Figurative meaning,* arises through metaphor, analogy, or symbolic association. They are context-dependent and semantically unstable, which makes them syn-semantic. While they are common in speech, their national-cultural marking may vary. The fourth type, *Specialized (terminological),* is *specific* to professional or scientific domains such as law, medicine, or sports. They are stable, context-independent, and auto-semantic, but limited in usage to specific fields. Specialized meanings are often nationally marked and may reflect artificially coined or metaphorically extended terms. Finally, the *Dialectal meaning,* is regionally or socially restricted but is still semantically stable and context-independent, making it auto-semantic. They reflect historical and cultural variation within the national language and often arise through localized motivational processes.

Each type of meaning can further be classified along a set of diagnostic criteria, including: (1) consistent vs. inconsistent, (2) stable vs. unstable, (3) primary vs. secondary, (4) etymological vs. historically motivated, (5) auto-semantic vs. syn-semantic, (6) general usage vs. specialized usage, (7) culturally specific vs. culturally neutral. Each of these criteria is widely recognized in lexicological and cognitive-semantic research and helps to differentiate and characterize various types of meanings within the structure of polysemous lexemes (Apresjan, 1974; Gak, 1976; Pashan, 2022; Serebrennikov & Ufimceva, 1977; Vorkachev & Vorkacheva, 2020; Zhanuzakov, 2008). From an etymological perspective, a word's primary meaning refers directly to an object or phenomenon in the real world. A word in its primary meaning is independently interpretable even when used in isolation - that is, it is auto-semantic. In contrast, a word with a derived meaning requires contextual support to be fully understood – making it syn-semantic. Such meanings become clear only within a specific lexical or syntactic environment. A derived meaning also emerges over time, evolving from the primary meaning and shaped by historical or cultural factors. However, when discussing the differences and similarities between the following meanings, the derived meaning is considered to be lost in the case of figurative meaning. In contrast, the figurative meaning retains its semiotic, metaphorical, emotional, and sensory aspects, making it more semantically rich compared to the derived meaning.

Similarly, in the context of the epistemological and linguistic aspect, the subsequent meanings, like derived meanings, consist of four structural components: the object, the word, the concept, and the primary object marker that serves as the basis for the secondary naming. These components form specialized and dialectal meanings. The distinguishing feature of specialized and dialectal meanings, compared to derived meanings, is that they are not widely used by the general public but have a specific, localized character. In other words, they are tied to particular geographical regions, professions, or fields of study. This distinction of types of lexical meanings of Kazakh polysemous nouns highlights the preservation of affective and sensory qualities in the figurative meaning, whereas the derived meaning lacks these components. For example, the word *боздақ* (bozdaq), meaning "seal", and its figurative meanings of "young man" or "young gentleman", as

well as the word *без* (bez), meaning "the soft area of a tree trunk or the place where branches gather", and its figurative meaning of "uselessness or unnecessariness," clearly illustrate the differences between literal and figurative meanings (Zhanuzakov, 2008).

Derived and figurative meanings often carry national characteristics, as they are both motivated and widely recognized by the general public. From a synchronic perspective, a polysemous lexeme can include both derived and figurative meanings within its structure. This reflects a shift from the primary meaning, that is, the transformation and expansion in usage. For instance, the primary meaning of *білезік* (bilezik), which refers to "the area where the forearm connects to the wrist", has evolved in modern usage to include figurative meanings such as "the part of a bird's leg where the foot is attached" and "a decorative item worn by women on the wrist for fashion". The ornamental item, the bracelet, also takes on a figurative meaning as "a line that runs horizontally across the upper surface of an object (such as a cow's horn)". Similarly, the word *күн* (kün) in its figurative meanings can mean "time, period, era", and its additional figurative meanings include "life, existence", and "weather, natural phenomena" (Zhanuzakov, 2008).

Meaning of a Polysemous Word in its Semantic Structure

Polysemy refers to the coexistence of multiple meanings within a single lexical unit. The semantic structure of a polysemous word typically comprises a primary (core) meaning and various secondary meanings, which include derivative, figurative (metaphorical), dialectal, and specialized senses, as discussed above. These types of meanings often emerge through either simple or complex motivational relationships, as described earlier in the study. Understanding their distinctions contributes to a more precise semantic classification of polysemous nouns. Since they arise through different types of semantic motivation, the initial referent always evolves based on associations such as function, form, location, or cultural context.

The meaning of a polysemous word in its semantic structure is etymologically original, and therefore, it typically lacks any inherent national or cultural specificity. However, due to this unique character, it can generate several secondary meanings of a word, either derivative or figurative. The derived meanings of a word need to be shaped by culturally specific experiences and reflect the worldview of a particular linguistic community. Since each culture perceives and interprets the world differently, names and meanings are assigned to reflect the Kazakh culturally rooted interpretation. For instance, a huge collection of stars, dust and gas known in Russian as *млечный путь* (mlechnyi put) – literally the Milky Way – is known in Kazakh as *құс жолы* (qūs joly) meaning the bird's path. In traditional Kazakh cosmology, *құс жолы* symbolizes the migratory routes of birds as they travel between the northern and southern regions. This metaphor encapsulates how the same object of reference may acquire different lexical representations depending on cultural frameworks and symbolic associations.

From an etymological perspective, a word's primary meaning refers directly to an object or phenomenon in the real world. In contrast, a derived meaning emerges over time, evolving from the primary meaning and shaped by historical or cultural factors. A clear example is the word *құмалақ* (qumalaq). Its original meaning is "the dried dung of animals such as sheep, goats, camels, or hares". Over time, this meaning gave rise to a secondary sense – "a type of fortune-telling or divination" – which developed from traditional practices that employed dried animal droppings as tools for prediction. The word *сірне* (sirne) demonstrates several layers of meaning. Its primary meaning is "a type of dish made by boiling dairy products." From this, two distinct meanings have developed. A derived meaning denotes "a fluid substance found in the cells and tissues of plants and animals". Meanwhile, a dialectal meaning refers to "a jelly-like dish (similar to *kholodets*) made by boiling sinewy bones", representing a regional culinary interpretation influenced by texture and preparation method. Similarly, the word *сүңгі* (süñgı) also exhibits semantic development over time. Its primary meaning is "a type of chainmail armour with fine iron mesh worn by warriors in ancient times for protection against arrows or spears". From this, a derived meaning has emerged: "a small container or vial used to store various items" (Zhanuzakov, 2008).

The primary nominative meaning also serves as the foundation for the development of subsequent noun meanings. Structurally, it comprises three interrelated components: the object, the word, and the concept. For instance, the primary nominative meaning of the word *бақыр* (baqyr) as "copper metal" serves as the basis for the development of several subsequent meanings. for instance, through attributive (qualitative) motivation, it acquires a figurative meaning denoting "cheapness" or "worthlessness". Through spatial (locational) motivation, *жұлдыз* also develops a figurative meaning referring to "a prominent figure, a public favorite, a person held in high esteem" (Zhanuzakov, 2008). Similarly, the primary meaning of the word *жұлдыз* (jūldyz) – "a celestial body that appears as a mere dot of light due to its great distance from Earth" – also generates several secondary meanings. Motivated by material association, it gives rise to a derivative meaning: "small metal coins ranging from one to five *tiyn*". Likewise, based on material motivation, it develops a dialectal meaning referring to "a bucket made of copper". For instance, based on temporal motivation, it gives rise to the derivative meaning "one of the twelve divisions of the year, a month".

The primary meaning of the word *доңыз* (doñyz) is "pig". From this core meaning, two distinct secondary meanings emerge through different types of semantic motivation. Through attributive (qualitative) motivation, it acquires a figurative meaning denoting "a person who is impure or unpleasant in character." Additionally,

based on mythological or folkloric motivation, it develops a specialized meaning as "the name of a year in the traditional Kazakh calendar" (Zhanuzakov, 2008). The word *желке* (jelke) initially denotes "the fibrous tendon located in the neck area". Via locational (spatial) motivation, it acquires a derivative meaning referring to "the area below the occipital bone, at the back of the skull". A similar case can be seen with the word *ай* (ai). Its basic, auto-semantic meaning is "the celestial body that illuminates the Earth at night". In contrast, its secondary meaning – "a calendar month, one of the twelve divisions of the year consisting of 28, 29, 30, or 31 days" – is syn-semantic and gains full interpretability only through contextual usage (Zhanuzakov, 2008).

In the Russian language, the word *подушка* (podushka) encompasses both the meaning of "a household item for resting one's head" and "a cushion placed on a saddle". In contrast, in Kazakh, these meanings are conveyed by the single term *жастық* (jastyq). Similarly, the Russian word *ковш* (kovsh) refers both to "a ladle used in domestic settings for pouring liquids" and to "the bucket of an excavator used for digging or loading". In Kazakh, these meanings are captured by the single term *ожау* (ojau), demonstrating semantic generalization within the Kazakh lexicon. Another example involves the metal tag attached to the ears of livestock, which in Kazakh is called *сырға* (syrğa). In Russian, this object is referred to as *серьги* (ser'gi) – a word more commonly associated with decorative earrings. This contrast reflects different cultural extensions of base meanings across languages.

Another illustrative case is the term *тұлып* (tūlyp), originally referring to "a type of outerwear made from various animal hides, such as fur coats or sheepskin garments" (Zhanuzakov, 2008). Through material motivation, this term develops a derived meaning: "the intact hide of a young animal, stuffed with hay or straw," which was traditionally used to soothe a mother animal mourning the loss of its offspring. The primary names of objects, phenomena, actions, movements, and qualities are typically unmotivated, as there is no inherent or natural connection between linguistic form and its semantic content. In contrast, derived or secondary lexical items – formed on the basis of an existing term – are considered motivated, as their meanings are grounded in a salient feature or attribute of the original object.

For instance, the word *қалам* (qalam), denoting a writing instrument that uses ink, is unmotivated in its primary sense (Zhanuzakov, 2008). However, in its secondary meaning - *қалам* referring to the four-edged, pointed end of a uyk (a roof pole of a yurt) is inserted into the shanyrak (the central circular opening of the yurt). This derived meaning is motivated by the formal resemblance – specifically, the pointedness – shared between the writing instrument and the structural component of the yurt. Another example involves the word *мүйіз* (müiiz), denoting a hard growth on the skulls of certain animals and livestock in its primary sense (Zhanuzakov, 2008). In a derived sense, it refers to the thickening and hardening of the skin on the palms of individuals engaged in heavy manual labour. Here, the naming is motivated by the common attribute of hardness and textural similarity between the horn and the calloused skin.

If a meaning comprises five components – namely, the object, the word, the concept, a salient feature of the original referent that serves as the basis for naming the subsequent one, and a synonymous designation of the secondary referent – then the meaning is considered figurative or transferred. For example, the word *кісен* (kisen), referring to "shackles" or "fetters" (Zhanuzakov, 2008), acquires the figurative meanings of "restraint" or "obstruction" through its functional similarity to *бұғау* (restraint), *кедергі* (obstacle). It is well established that secondary meanings – including derived, figurative, and dialectal meanings – are formed through two principal types of associative (or imaginative) processes: contiguity-based association and similarity-based association. In the phrase *Әуезовті оқу* (Äuezovti oqu) [to read Äuezov], the proper noun *Äuezov* stands metonymically for his literary works. This is an example of author-for-work metonymy, a common linguistic phenomenon where the name of a creator is used to represent their creation. Similarly, in the expression *табақ желінді* (tabaq jelindi), the noun *табақ* [dish] functions metonymically, where the container stands for its contents - specifically, the meat served on the dish. This is a typical example of metonymy based on contiguity, where the physical or contextual closeness between two entities allows one to stand in for the other.

Another illustrative case appears in the expression *"Ауылда он шақты түтін бар"* (Auylda on şaqty tütin bar) [There are about ten smoke columns in the village]. Here, the word *түтін* [smoke] functions as both metonymy and synecdoche: it refers to households through the visual sign of smoke, which is physically and culturally associated with inhabited dwellings. This instance demonstrates part-for-whole representation, where a salient feature (smoke) symbolizes the larger referent (family or home). Through associations based on contiguity and similarity, not only figurative meanings but also semantic nuances – such as subtle shades of meaning, expressive connotations, and rare or context-dependent usages – are derived from primary and secondary meanings.

Context-Dependent Usage of Lexical Units

Context plays a crucial role in comparing the meanings of lexical units. This is because context allows for the comparison of not only the meanings of polysemous words but also the meanings of mono semous words. Derived or figurative meanings, where the figurative, emotional, and sensory aspects are blurred, are clarified not through the primary meaning but through the context in which they appear. As we are aware, the primary meaning of a word is independent and is auto-semantic, while its derived meaning requires contextual support in order to fully understand it, making it syn-semantic. Such meanings become clear only within a specific lexical

or syntactic environment. For instance, the phrase "the thick section of the large intestine that ends where it connects to the small intestine" refers to the *бүйен* (büyen - caecum), which, when dried, was traditionally used as the taut leather string for drawing the bow of the *адырна* (adyrna) – a traditional Kazakh wind instrument. This specific meaning becomes clear only through contextual interpretation (Zhanuzakov, 2008). Another word *балдақ* (baldaq) illustrates a similar distinction. Its primary meaning - "a specially designed support used by a person with a walking disability" – can be understood without any context. However, its secondary meaning – "a forked rest attached to the front of a saddle for carrying hunting birds such as eagles or hawks while on horseback" – is context-dependent and requires explanatory support (Zhanuzakov, 2008).

Semantic nuances can be further classified into *expressive* and *emotional* undertones, while instances of word usage may vary in terms of rarity or innovativeness, often emerging in context-specific or novel linguistic environments. The primary means of identifying words with multiple meanings or shades of meaning is context. In this regard, context operates analogously to litmus paper in a chemistry laboratory – it serves as a precise indicator of semantic value. These aspects can be observed in the semantic variations of the following words. For instance, from a diachronic perspective, the word *қатын* (qatyn) originally denoted a woman's title or a designation of a high rank. Over time, it evolved into the more general meaning of "wife" or "spouse". Eventually, however, the word developed expressive and emotional undertone and began to carry a pejorative sense, such as "coward" or "weak-hearted individual", reflecting its shift toward derogatory usage. Likewise, the primary meaning of the word *құжыра* (qūjyra) refers to "a small room near a mosque or madrasa where students reside" (Zhanuzakov, 2008). Its derived meaning is "a small, low dwelling built of stone, adobe, or clay". In its nuanced sense, it conveys the idea of "a modest, insignificant little hut". If the semantic load of a word is stable in its meaning, the additional naming function does not apply. However, if it remains unstable, the nuance of its meaning and the usage of the word continue to fluctuate into metaphorical forms.

Morphological and Metaphorical Structures of Polysemous Words

While morphology relates to the structure of words, metaphors can use these structures in a figurative or derivative way. Such supplementary meanings may be historically related to the original object in primary sense, which functions as a semantically independent unit with its own morphological characteristics. For instance, the word *қом* (qom), in its primary sense referring to "the solid fat ridge at the base of a camel's humps" (Zhanuzakov, 2008) appears only in specific expressions when used in its derived meanings. The phrase *қомы астаудай* (qomy astaudai) is typically used to describe a camel with a large, heavy hump, suggesting health, strength, or readiness to carry loads. In broader metaphorical usage, it may also describe abundance, fullness, or physical robustness. In another idiomatic expression *қомынан босады* (qomynan bosady), meaning "to become free from the burden" or metaphorically "become independent, escape subordination", *қом* refers not to the fat ridge itself, but to the layered felt padding placed over a camel's back and between its humps to support a load. These examples illustrate how the word acquires specialized, context-bound meanings that differ significantly from its original reference, thereby functioning as distinct lexical-semantic units.

In another example, the word *горло* (gorlo) in Russian is not employed metaphorically to refer to food – unlike in Kazakh, where expressions involving the throat (e.g., *тағам, дәм, ас*) metaphorically connect to nourishment. Similarly, in Russian, *лопатка* (lopatka) refers to both a shoulder blade and a small shovel or spatula, a semantic link not found in Kazakh, where *жауырын* (jauyryn) is used exclusively in the anatomical sense. These examples illustrate how linguistic meaning is shaped by culturally specific associations, metaphorical extensions, and distinct patterns of lexical generalization and specialization across languages. A derived type of meaning is composed of four interrelated components: the object, the word, the concept, and the specific characteristic of the original referent that serves as the semantic basis for naming another object.

For instance, the defining features of the word *тіс* (tis) – "a bony structure located in the oral cavity, aligned in rows and adapted for chewing or tearing food and vegetation" (Zhanuzakov, 2008) – such as sharpness, location, and function (cutting, grinding), provide the foundation for metaphorical naming in agricultural terminology. These characteristics underpin the derived names of various farming tools, particularly those referring to pointed or bladed implements. Similarly, the component of the *dombyra* (a traditional Kazakh stringed instrument) known as *ішек* (işek) – literally "the internal organ through which food passes in living organisms" (Zhanuzakov, 2008) – acquires a secondary meaning based on material resemblance, as strings were traditionally made from animal intestines.

Likewise, a phrase like *қасқыр жігіт* (qasqyr jigit), refers to a person with a harsh, or even cruel character, like that of a wolf, and *түлкі адам* (tülki adam) referring to a person who is clever, cunning, or tricky, like a fox, involve metaphors formed through similarity-based association, where human characteristics are compared to those of animals. Similarly, the word *қырау* (qyrau) through metaphorical extension, denotes "grey or white hair", drawing on the visual similarity between hoarfrost and the whiteness associated with ageing (Zhanuzakov, 2008). The characteristic of *көпір* (köpir), as a passageway motivates its metaphorical use in meanings such as "connector" or "mediator", reflecting its bridging function between separate entities. The word *жөргек* (jörgek) (Zhanuzakov, 2008), originally referring to cloth used for swaddling infants, is metaphorically extended to denote early childhood or youth (babyhood, infancy, or one's

early years), representing a supplementary or figurative meaning.

Metaphors are classified into two types: genetic and classificatory metaphors. A genetic metaphor refers to a derived meaning in which the figurative quality has been completely lost over time, resulting in a semantically autonomous unit. In contrast, when a word retains its figurative colouring and functions as a secondary, associative naming device, it is considered a classificatory (or qualifying) metaphor, representing a figurative (or transferred) meaning (Shen, 1998). The word *шүмек* (shümek) (Zhanuzakov, 2008) - originally referring to a spout**,** nozzle, or faucet – a part of a container or vessel that allows liquid to flow out, commonly found in objects like pitcher, teapot, and samovar – is considered a genetic metaphor, as it later came to be used in reference to a tool made from a sheep's knucklebone, designed for a specific, though niche, purpose (for example, directing the urine of an infant in a cradle). In contrast, the word *тұтқа* (tūtqa) (Zhanuzakov, 2008), which originally referred to "the part of a door or similar object made for easy manual gripping", is considered a classificatory metaphor, with its figurative meaning extending to "a support, prop, or pillar".

A well-established principle in linguistics is the classification of metaphors into nominative and descriptive categories (Crisp, Heywood, & Steen, 2002). If a metaphor is used to name an object or concept that does not have a specific term in the language, it is called a *nominative metaphor*. In contrast, when a metaphor is used to describe or add additional characteristics to an already named object, it is referred to as a *descriptive metaphor*. Here are some words that serve as examples of nominative metaphors. The word *күлте* (külte), whose primary meaning is "a bundle of thread twisted together", in its derived meaning refers to "the flower petal crown that protects the male and female reproductive organs from various injuries". Similarly, the word *жабағы* (jabağy) whose primary meaning "the short, dense winter coat of sheep and camels", in its derived meaning refers to "a foal aged between six months and one year" (Zhanuzakov, 2008).

The word *әліппе* (älippe), whose primary meaning is "a book used to introduce learners to the alphabet; a first primer", has a figurative meaning referring to "the beginning or introductory stage of something". The word *бұт* (būt), originally meaning "the inner part of a human or animal leg (thigh)", has a figurative meaning "the leg of a stove or tripod". Similarly, *азбан* (azban), which primarily denotes "a castrated or restrained male animal", in figurative usage, can describe a person who is morally weak, impotent in character, or unproductive (Zhanuzakov, 2008). These are all examples of descriptive metaphors, where the metaphor adds a characterizing or evaluative dimension to an existing concept.

Semantic Shift and Lexical Substitution of Polysemous Words

In the process of componential analysis of polysemous words, it is essential to consider the distinctive features of such linguistic phenomena as "semantic shift" and "lexical substitution." For instance, the Kazakh word *ошақ* (oṣaq) primarily denotes "a three-legged circular iron structure used for suspending a cauldron" (Zhanuzakov, 2008). However, it also refers to "a household structure made of stone or brick used for cooking by suspending a cauldron over it," which represents a derived meaning. In this case, the word undergoes a semantic shift, acquiring a new referential meaning while maintaining a conceptual link to its original sense, as seen in the following example:

Kazakh: *Сауаңға деп ұстап отырған жалғыз түйені қасқырдың жеуі Шәкір ошаққа салмақтылу соққы болды"*
Tatar-Turkic: Sauañğa dep ūstap otyrğan jalğyz tüienı qasqyrdyñ jeuı Şäkır oṣaqqa salmaqtylu soqqy boldy
English: The loss of the only camel kept for milking, devoured by a wolf, was a heavy blow to Shakir's oshak.]

In this sentence "the word *ошақ* is used metaphorically to mean "household" or "family." Here, the meaning has shifted through metaphorical extension, illustrating a case of semantic transfer rather than lexical substitution. In the first example, the transfer of a name from one object to another contributes to polysemy, that is, the emergence of a new, additional meaning. In contrast, in the second one, the semantics of the word does not change; instead, the word is used metaphorically or figuratively, without altering its core meaning indicating the case of homogeneous polysemy. Klychkov (1961) identifies two types of homogeneous polysemy. According to him, the first type is based on object-logical features, where semantically related lexemes (homonyms) share common semantic components. In contrast, the second type arises in specific speech contexts, where an object-related feature is used situationally. In such cases, rather than producing entirely new meanings, the word develops various shades, nuances, or variants of a single core meaning. The meaning of a word does not change simply because it is used in different senses within specific speech situations. For example, the word *түтін* (tütin) is defined as "a bluish-grey or dark-coloured gaseous substance rising from fire" (Zhanuzakov, 2008).

Kazakh: *оттан будақтап тарайтын көшіл сұр немесе қарақошқыл зат газды» «Басында бес-ақ түтіннен құралған топ аз уақыт ішінде отыз түтінге жетті»*
Tatar-Turkic: ottan budaqtap tapaityn kökşıl sūp nemese qapaqoşqyl zat gazdy» «Basynda bes-aq tütınnen qūpalğan top az uaqyt işinde otyz tütinge jetti
English: A bluish-gray or blackish substance that is emitted from a fire is a gas. A group of five white smokes at the beginning quickly grew to thirty smokes.

In this sentence, the word *түтін* is used figuratively to represent "household", yet the core meaning remains

intact. Similarly, the word *ебелек* (yebelek) is defined as "an annual herb, 10-30 centimetres tall, with rounded stems, typically growing in arid, sandy, or saline soils" (Zhanuzakov, 2008). However, when used metaphorically, it can convey meanings such as "weakness", "helplessness", "lack of strength", or even "frivolity" and "flightiness", depending on the context. The core meanings of the words *түтін* and *ебелек* remain unchanged. Such words are referred to as "contextual nominations", because rather than focusing on the meaning itself, they emphasize the nuances of meaning and the context in which a word is used, which can be more limited. The concept that remains unchanged across all contexts is *meaning* – the understanding derived from the primary meaning of a word, or the totality of all psychological factors associated with the *word's sense*. In summary, if the meaning is understood by the entire linguistic community, it is considered *meaning*; if it is understood only by a specific group or individual members of the community, it is considered *sense*. However, the understanding of meaning by the general public and the understanding of sense by individuals cannot be regarded as the ultimate truth. This is because even the general public may not always be familiar with meanings such as *қауыз* (qauyz) [egg shell] or *қауақ* (qauaq) [container] (Zhanuzakov, 2008). In addition to its primary meanings – "the singed skin of a slaughtered animal" and "the part of the human scalp where hair grows" – the word *құйқа* (qūiqa) is also used to refer to "the upper layer of soil," as in the example:

Kazakh: *Біздің жігіттер қазуға жердің жұмсақ құйқасын іздейді"*
Tatar-Turkic: Bızdıñ jıgıttep qazuǧa jepdıñ jūmsaq qūiqasyn ızdeidı
English: Our zhigits search for the soft topsoil to dig into.

Likewise, the word *қоя* (qoia), which is generally defined as "undigested matter left in a bird's crop or a dog's stomach", also appears in figurative use to mean "a hidden opinion, an unspoken secret, or a mess" (Sadykbekov, 1973). This is evident in the following example:

Kazakh: *Сәкенді онда апармай мұнда әкелуі жай емес, қоясын жасырғаны.*
Tatar-Turkic: Säkendı onda apapmai mūnda äkelui jai emes, qoiasyn jasypǧany
English: It was no coincidence that they brought Saken here and not elsewhere – he had something to hide, his intentions.

Homogeneous and heterogeneous dialectal polysemy

Polysemous words in the Kazakh language can be shared within a single dialect or across several dialects. This leads to two types of dialectal polysemy: homogeneous and heterogeneous dialectal polysemy. Homogeneous dialectal polysemy refers to when a polysemous word shares multiple meanings within a single dialect or a specific region. Heterogeneous dialectal polysemy refers to when a polysemous word has different meanings across various dialects or regions. For instance, in literary language, the word *сілбі* (silbi) means "slowly falling rain" and "material used by a weaver to create patterns". However, in the dialect of East Kazakhstan, it also means "a thin leather or rope passed through the nose of a camel", while in Kostanay, it refers to "thin, creamy ice".

Similarly, the word *тырнақ* (tyrnaq) meaning "a hard and sharp protrusion at the tip of the limbs" has dialectal meanings, such as "the place where the glass of a lamp is placed" among Kazakhs in Turkmenistan, and in the Kyzylorda region, it refers to "the reed, cane, or cornice hanging from the roof to prevent rain from splashing against the house". These are examples of dialectal polysemy. The word *сілбі* refers to a polysemous word used within a single dialect, whereas *тырнақ* denotes a polysemous word that is common across multiple dialects. If a single word exhibits multiple meanings across several regional dialects, it is classified as heterogeneous dialectal polysemy. For example, the word *тоқаш* (toqaş) refers to baursak (a type of fried dough) in the Shymkent, Zhambyl, and Almaty regions; to oven-baked flatbread in the Abai region; and to gingerbread in parts of the Karaganda and Almaty regions. Similarly, the word *шөлмек* (şölmek) is used to mean glass container or bottle among Kazakhs in Turkmenistan, as well as in Aktobe and Central Kazakhstan, whereas in the Abai region, it denotes a clay jug. These instances exemplify heterogeneous dialectal polysemy. Overall, the results confirm that polysemous structures in Kazakh exhibit systematic motivational relationships rooted in both linguistic and cultural patterns. By classifying meanings and motivations in a unified framework, this study offers new perspectives on the internal logic of polysemy and its role in the semantic organization of the lexicon. The discussion below elaborates on these findings within the context of existing linguistic theory.

Discussion

The findings of this study offer critical insights into the semantic architecture of polysemous nominal nouns in the Kazakh language, particularly through the lens of motivational typology. By applying a detailed framework of semantic motivation, this research distinguishes between simple and complex motivational mechanisms, showing how meanings evolve from a single core sense into richly layered semantic structures. First, the study confirms that simple motivations, driven by a single semantic factor (e.g., shape, function, material, or sensory quality), are widespread in polysemous lexemes. For instance, words like *қылыш* (cold weapon / weaving tool) and *қом* (camel fat / felt covering) exhibit strong form-based and spatial motivation, respectively. These findings affirm prior work by Gak (1976) and Muratbek (2023), who emphasized the role

of archiseme and integral seme in structuring polysemy. Our corpus-based analysis also illustrates that simple motivations are systematically categorizable across phonetic, spatial, olfactory, temporal, and functional domains, as demonstrated in Table 2.

Second, the research identifies complex motivations, where multiple semantic factors (e.g., shape + material, function + location) intersect. Lexemes such as *орамал* (headscarf / towel) and *қоңырау* (bell / clock marker) illustrate how multiple associations reinforce the semantic extension of a core meaning. This confirms that polysemy in Kazakh is not always linear, but often radial or chain-like, consistent with models proposed by Katsnelson (2025) and Beloshapkova (1977). These findings were systematized in this study and the idea was reinforced that Kazakh exhibits a typologically rich structure of motivationally complex polysemous patterns, particularly in culturally salient domains like textiles, architecture, and animal husbandry. Third, the study reveals important structural parallels between syntactic dependency and semantic motivation. Just as subordinate clauses in complex sentences are linked to the main clause, secondary meanings in polysemy exhibit parallel, sequential, or radial-sequential relationships to the primary sense. This structural insight extends the metaphor of linguistic architecture, underscoring the systemic nature of meaning formation in Kazakh.

Additionally, the research contributes to cross-linguistic semantics by showing how nationally specific conceptualizations shape figurative, specialized, and dialectal meanings. Cases like *құс жолы* (Milky Way as "bird's path") and *жастық* (used both for pillow and saddle pad) illustrate the deep embedding of cultural worldview in lexical semantics, aligning with the ethnolinguistic theories of Sadykbekov (1973) and Zhanuzakov (2008). Finally, the study advances semantic typology by defining five distinct types of meaning – primary, derived, figurative, specialized, and dialectal – using clear diagnostic criteria (e.g., context dependency, semantic stability, cultural markedness). These distinctions were not only theoretically grounded but practically illustrated through authentic examples and contextual use, reinforcing the applicability of componential analysis to polysemy in natural language.

Conclusion

The relevance of this study lies in the lack of comprehensive, criteria-based frameworks for identifying and classifying the motivational links underlying polysemous meanings in Kazakh. While polysemy has been broadly discussed in relation to homonymy and semantic transfer, there remains an insufficiently developed methodology for distinguishing among types of meanings within the semantic structure of nominal lexemes. This study develops a systematic set of criteria for classifying meanings within the semantic structure of polysemy in Kazakh nominal nouns. Applying the frameworks of linguistic nomination and motivational semantics, it proposes a rigorous, functionally grounded model that captures both primary and secondary naming mechanisms. This study has offered a comprehensive linguistic analysis of the semantic structure of polysemous nouns in the Kazakh language through the lens of motivational semantics. By integrating componential, etymological, and ethnolinguistic approaches, the research has achieved its stated objective: to establish a systematic and theoretically grounded classification of meanings within polysemous lexical units. The investigation has demonstrated that polysemous meanings are not random or arbitrary but are formed through identifiable motivational mechanisms. These mechanisms were classified into simple (based on a single motivating factor such as function, form, material, location) and complex (involving multiple, overlapping motivational factors). The examples presented – such as *орамал, қылыш, қоңырау*, and *жарғақ* – clearly illustrated how primary meanings give rise to secondary, figurative, specialised, and dialectal meanings through systematic semantic extension.

The study also introduced and applied a refined typology of meaning types – primary, derivative, figurative, specialized, and dialectal – and outlined the semantic criteria for their distinction, such as stability, motivation, contextual dependence, and functional specificity. These types of meanings were shown to correlate with specific motivational structures and reflect broader cognitive and cultural processes of naming and categorization. Through the identification of arch semes, integral semes, and differential semes, the analysis revealed the internal architecture of polysemous meaning systems. These semantic markers served not only to connect meanings within a word but also to differentiate them across usage contexts and domains. This approach made it possible to map the semantic "distance" between meanings and to understand how lexical items function as naming units within both general and specialized language.

Despite the breadth of lexical data analyzed, this study is limited in several respects. First, it focused exclusively on nominal lexemes, leaving out verbal and adjectival polysemy. Second, the corpus was based primarily on published dictionaries and selected ethnolinguistic materials, which may not fully reflect spontaneous usage in contemporary spoken Kazakh. Future research could expand the scope to include dynamic corpora, regional speech samples, or computational modelling of polysemy to further validate and refine the proposed classification. The findings contribute to the broader understanding of how polysemy operates within Turkic languages, particularly Kazakh, and support the notion that the evolution of meaning is both linguistically motivated and culturally embedded. By offering a structured framework for classifying and interpreting polysemous meanings, this research provides valuable tools for future studies in lexical

semantics, language standardization, lexicography, and educational linguistics.

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