

**«My Children» by G. Yakhina as a historical Novel through the prism of the lexical  
and semantic field «German»**

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***Abstract.** The article examines the novel by Guzeli Yakhina "My Children" from the point of view of the functioning of the lexical-semantic field "German", which makes it possible to see the diversity of the author's approaches to the embodiment of the theme of the novel. This study made it possible to identify a number of microfields in the system of the leading lexico-semantic field: proper names of heroes, geographical names, Germanisms, etc. Generalization of the material allows us to determine the deep awareness of the author in the historical topic, the unusualness of its embodiment, the linguistic perfection of the work.*

***Keywords:** contemporary Russian literature, G. Yakhina, the novel "My Children", the lexico-semantic field.*

One of the most significant systems in modern linguistics is the lexical-semantic field. A huge number of definitions and interpretations of the concept of "lexical-semantic field", in principle, boils down to understanding it as an association of a group of words that, "despite structural differences, are based on this or that semantic category or categorical situation" [1, p. 126]. Researchers note that the structuring of lexemes in the analysis of a literary text allows a deeper understanding of the concept of the work, to assess the style of the author [2-5]. In a literary work, the construction of the lexical-semantic field and the identification of microfields help to establish a logical connection between parts of the text, the logic of the plot, and the peculiarities of the implementation of its idea.

"My Children" (2018) by G. Yakhina is a novel by a modern writer dedicated to the dramatic page in the history of the Volga Germans in Russia at the turn of the epochs. We believe that looking at a work through the lexical-semantic field "German" will help to reveal many facets of the novel, which are clearly visible only with this approach to the study of a literary text.

The stream of reviews about G. Yakhina's novel "My Children" defines many aspects worthy of close attention of critics and readers [6-10]. This article will focus on how the author recreates the world of Russian Germans unknown to many. The analysis of the lexical-semantic field "German" and its microfields helps to do this.

Reading the text of the work made it possible to identify more than 200 lexical items related to the lexico-semantic field "German". It is especially important that the frequency of their use varies in different parts of the book.

According to our observations, the microfield "proper names" has become the most used in the lexical-semantic field "German". Linguist V.A. Nikonov believes: "The name of a character is one of the means that create an artistic image, it can characterize the social belonging of a character, convey national and local flavor, and if the action takes place in the past, then recreate the historical truth (or destroy it, if the name was chosen contrary to the truth)"[11, p. 234]. The significance of the name of the characters in a literary work is noted in the works of V.V. Vinogradova [12], A.V. Superanskaya [13], S.I. Zinin [14] and many others. At the beginning of the novel G. Yakhina introduces the main character - the teacher Jacob Ivanovich Bach. The combination of his name and patronymic implies some kind of duality, the Russian-German essence not only of his fate, but of all immigrants from Germany and their numerous descendants, for whom Russia became their homeland. Acquaintance with Bach's fellow countrymen fills the "proper name" microfield: Pastor Adam Handel, widow Koch, fat woman Amy Böll, pig-breeder Gauf, grandmother Fischer, carpenter Schroeder, family Dürer, worker Kohl, weaver Diesel, ingratiating Gauss, head Peter Dietrich, miller Julius Wagner, artist Anton Fromm, blacksmith Benz. As the plot develops, Jacob Bach's "inner circle" includes Udo Grimm - the father of the teacher's future wife, her nanny Tilda, as well as the hunchback Hoffmann, who arrived in a German settlement to build a new life, and along with him the editors Wundt and Fichte are mentioned, chairman of the party committee Becker. Note that almost all surnames are well known in Russia, they are associated with their more famous carriers: writers, philosophers, politicians, scientists, artists, musicians who glorified Germany, like the name of the protagonist. Why does the author choose these sonorous surnames for his most ordinary characters? There can be a great variety of answers. For example, researcher V.N. Mikhailov notes: "The use of the name bears the stamp of a certain era, literary trend, class position of the author. One and the same name can serve different purposes"[15, p. 54]. Perhaps, in the work of G. Yakhina "My Children" this way emphasizes the idea of the unclaimed potential of Russian Germans in Russia at the beginning of the XX century, whose "loud" names remind of the best representatives of the German people and their world-class achievements.

An important component of this microfield is the names of the true geniuses of German culture and literature. Bach, as a teacher, was directly connected with them. "The only subject when a thought regained its former freshness and vigor was German speech. Bach did not like to delve into calligraphy, hastily strived the lesson towards the poetic part: Novalis, Schiller, Heine - poems poured on young shaggy heads generously, like water on a bath day"[16, p. 19]. This list is continued by Lessing, Gottshed, the brothers Grimm, Goethe. The reality and significance of this list of proper names are conveyed through the inclusion in it of the names of Volner - the author of "Russian speech", Goldenberg - the author of a problem book on mathematics, which was always in Bach's hands during the lesson.

German proper names, at the same time, in this microfield also carry a significant ideological load, create a historical context in the work, and bring drama. They appear in chronological order, lined up in accordance with the logic of the historical process of the XX century: Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg. In the scene of the "Gnadental revolt", a generalizing assessment is given. "Books are out of abundance! Posters from the school and a propaganda corner! Magazines and newspapers! - continued to shout Benz. - Portraits of all these canine sons and daughters, whom God for some reason awarded with German names! Paper rolls, stacks of books flew into the fire, then - one after another - massive painted frames with photographs: from Karl Marx to Karl Liebknecht" [16, p. 303]. This list of historical figures, who fatally influenced the fate of millions of people and largely determined the attitude towards the Russian Germans, is continued by Paul von Hindenburg, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Rudolf Hess, Adolf Hitler. G. Yakhina introduces these German proper names into his work as certain temporal and historical landmarks, which make it possible to relate the life of the heroes of the novel to a great historical time.

In the analyzed microfield, an interesting author's technique can be called the use of a proper name in the plural, and sometimes writing it with a small letter. These spelling violations are fully justified in terms of the theme and idea of the novel. For example, the chapter "Wife" contains an assessment of V.I. Lenin, given by his followers: "Someone in the Politburo believed that the leader was killed by the Germans. All these försters, clemperers, nonke, borchardts, strumplers, bumke are a zapoloshny croaking flock that flew in from Germany" [16, p. 129]. In the chapter "Daughter" there is another example: "People walked next to the wagons: cheerful Manns, stingy Langs, God-fearing Wenders, hardworking Grasses" [16, p. 213]. The chapter "The Apprentice" describes a new generation of future builders of a happy life: "Round-cheeked kids, surprisingly born in the most hungry and troubled years of the German Republic - little Lenche, Amalche, Hanselche and Gretche - sat on low benches around the porch and listened to the words, which a couple of nights ago came out from under the hand of Bach"[16, p. 256]. In

this form of writing proper names, one can see the depersonalization of "tens of Khans and Peter" [16, p. 132] in the eyes of the mighty of this world. On the other hand, the plural form, which is unusual for proper nouns, creates a feeling of replication and mass character. These are not individual concrete personalities, but a whole people with their own language and traditions, which were once torn off from their roots, but did not find them on Russian soil, becoming an integral part of the history of Russia.

The original subsystem of this microfield can be considered the names that came from German folklore, which literally permeates the entire novel. These are "stupid Hans", "Pied Piper of Hamelin", "Osling giant". They are organically woven into the text of the work, becoming bright allusions and metaphors.

The next significant microfield of the lexical-semantic field "German" in the novel "My Children" are geographical and administrative names. The main lexeme, of course, in this microfield is the word "Germany" and many derivatives formed from it. Kaiser's Germany, Weimar Germany, imperial Germany - all these phrases reflect the rapidly changing image of the European power, its political system. However, the two phrases have, rather, a metaphorical meaning: Volga Germany ("Then Volga "Germany" was defined a more modest, although still worthy role: to become, if not an instrument of building communism, but its agitational showcase" [16, p. 133]) and tame Germany ("With his own hands he created a German commune on the banks of the Volga - a kind of small tame Germany, directly subordinate to the government in Moscow" [16, p. 133]).

The names of the Volga colonies make up a broader group of lexemes of this microfield. Their analysis allows us to reveal an obvious dilemma of these lexemes according to the principle "here - there" in Russia and Germany. "The colonists brought their languages in the middle of the eighteenth century from a distant historical homeland - from Westphalia and Saxony, Bavaria, Tyrol and Württemberg, Alsace and Lorraine, Baden and Hesse" [16, p. 20]. The image of distant Germany appears in the names of German lands, which were never seen by the Volga Germans living in the twentieth century, in the mentions of the rivers: Rhine, Spree, Oder, Elbe, Weser, Main, Ruhr. These realities of the German lands live in the national memory of the Volga Germans, shrouded in an idyllic haze and from this become more beautiful, desirable, but unattainable. Obviously, in an effort to preserve this memory for posterity, to root their national identity, the German colonists gave their settlements sonorous names, many of which repeat the names of German cities and villages. So, the Volga Gnadental, where the events of the novel unfold, even with its architecture resembles the Saxon Gnadental, located on the banks of the Elbe. The names of the Volga colonies: Balzer, Kutter, Messer, Schilling, Schwab, Zurich, Basel, Schenchen, Zug, Glarus, Urbach, Straub, Unterdorf, Kuknus - retained the names

of the first settlers, founders of settlements, or brought the names of German cities into Russian toponymy.

Another interesting component of the lexical-semantic field "German" is the actual German words, partly included in the Russian language as barbarisms, or rather Germanisms [17, 18], partly remaining only an example of German-language vocabulary, which sounds very harmoniously in the novel "My Children": Schulmeister, Schulhaus, Kircha, Frohlein, Schwank, Klomps, Ledger, Landgrave, Reich, Reichsmark, Fuhrer. In the work, these lexemes, on the one hand, help to create the atmosphere of Gnadenthal and similar German colonies, preserving their linguistic and cultural identity. On the other hand, they once again emphasize the tragedy of the fate of the colonists, whose peaceful life was crossed out by the Fuhrer, who wished to elevate his Reich to the status of a superpower. There are also unusual phrases in this microfield. For example, in a note written by Bach on the worldview of the colonists, we read that "for more than a hundred years, the Russian Germans, without noticing it, turned into a people different from the Reichsdeutsch people" [16, p. 190]. The distinction between "Reichsdeutsche" and "Volksdeutsche" was relevant only for the Germans of the twentieth century. In the minds of Jacob Bach, who was far from the political strategies of the Nazis, the "Reichsdochs" meant the Germans of Germany, who were not at all like the colonists of the Volga region. This lexeme in the novel is associated with the bitter reflections of the protagonist of the work about the bitter share that fell to his relatives: "So isn't it time for us, Russian Germans, to understand that distant happiness does not exist?" [16, p. 191] The concept of "volsdeutsche" is actualized in connection with the Nazi policy of fascist Germany and will only sound in a new context at the end of the novel.

Lexemes that come from the German language and are written in German are adjacent to this microfield. There are not many of them in the text, but they are necessary as a kind of document, a kind of national and cultural sign of the era. These are numerous names of German newspapers, political organizations, as well as words from songs, proverbs, etc.

The analysis of the lexical-semantic field "German" in G. Yakhina's novel "My Children" is impossible without the lexeme "German" itself, which occurs quite often in the text, but at the same time brings a lot of metaphorical meanings into the work. It is important to note the changing emotional coloring of these words and phrases from chapter to chapter. At the beginning of the novel, the pre-revolutionary life of the Volga colonies is calm and full-flowing, like the Volga. On behalf of Jacob Bach, the traditional concepts for the worldview of immigrants sound: German, high German, literary German, German speech, German princess (as the colonists called Catherine II), German doctors, Russian Germans, German accuracy. The revolution of 1917 abruptly changed the life of the Volga colonies. These changes were reflected

in new phrases: the German commune, the German working people, the German Socialist Republic. As the Soviet regime, in the context of the aggravation of political relations with Germany, changes its attitude towards immigrants, the words denoting everyday life and customs are reduced, become deliberately rude: German commune, non-republic, German film, German kurkuli, nemchura. The final chord of this falling gradation in the assessment and perception of the colonists will be Stalin's reflections on them: "Germany has been preparing for war, has been preparing for a long time. In its rich arsenal, among others, there was an untested, but serious weapon: ethnic Germans - a herd of Trojan horses scattered across the globe and waiting in the wings. Hitler - a madman, hysterical and undoubted demagogic genius - during his many hours of speeches fell into oratorical ecstasy, telling about the unfair attitude of other states towards the "most faithful sons of the Aryan nation" living on their territories. He longed for these sons to stand under the banner of the Reich: he proclaimed the beginning of the struggle for the creation of Nazi Germany abroad and introduced the concept of "absolute German", which automatically turned anyone in whom the noble Aryan blood flowed into a Nazi, for "blood is stronger than a passport" [16, p. 457]. It should be noted that the lexemes of this microfield are more saturated with the first and last chapters of the novel, as two polar points of view reflecting opposite views on the German colonists in Russia.

In general, a look at G. Yakhina's novel "My Children" through the prism of the lexico-semantic field "German" allows you to see in relief the large-scale historical and cultural material of the work, to appreciate the subtle style of the text, the skill of the writer. It is quite logical that proper names have become a more voluminous microfield, since the tragedy of the fate of the Volga Germans is manifested in the life lines of individual people - the heroes of the novel. The capacity of the lexical and semantic field of the novel "My Children" gives it authenticity and persuasiveness, which is very important for any work of historical subjects.

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