

**Ob-Ugric languages: conceptual structures, lexicon, constructions, categories.** An innovative approach to creating descriptive resources for Khanty and Mansi  
Project number: 08-EuroBABEL-OP-015



The goal of the project is to provide innovative descriptive resources for and modern linguistic analysis of two related Ob-Ugric languages Khanty (Ostyak) and Mansi (Vogul). Both languages are highly endangered: of the many Mansi dialects only the Northern one survives, and the percentage of native speakers is under 20% (out of ca. 8000 ethnic Mansi), the majority of them above 50 years of age. Khanty has a better percentage of native speakers (about 30% out of ca. 22.000), and some better preserved dialects, but the Southern dialects are already lost. In most Ob-Ugric speaker communities, transmission of the language to the youngest generations has ceased, so both languages are in ultimate danger of extinction.

The project is one of those five research programs that were elected by the [European Science Foundation](#) to be funded in a „European Collaborative Research“ program [EuroBABEL](#) („Better Analyses Based on Endangered Languages“).

Collaborators: Ludwig Maximilian University Munich, Helsinki University, Vienna University, University of Szeged, Research Institute for Linguistics, HAS. The coordinator of the collaborative project is Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich (project leader: [Prof. Dr. Elena Skribnik](#)). The Hungarian project is funded by the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund ([OTKA](#) NN 79666).

The Hungarian team:

[Bakró-Nagy, Marianne](#) (principal investigator)

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[Homepage of the Ob-BABEL project](#)

#### **Abstract of the Hungarian project**

**Ob-Ugric languages: conceptual structures, lexicon, constructions, categories.**  
An innovative approach to creating descriptive resources for Khanty and Mansi

## **IP 2: Individual Project of the University of Szeged and the Institute of Linguistics, Budapest, Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Hungary)**

### **a) IP aims and objectives**

The Budapest/Szeged team will concentrate on the following areas of descriptive resources:

a. Preparing an adequate digitalized version of the Mansi texts first published by Bernát Munkácsi in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century – in cooperation with Vienna University, b. Digitalized version of Munkácsi-Kálmán's Wogulisches Wörterbuch (1984, Budapest), c. Digitalized version of V. Černetsov's archive material on Mansi with English translation – in cooperation with the LMU Munich. d. Syntax: Typological description of Khanty and Mansi conditional constructions with special reference to topic and focus position. e. Cooperation with etymological dictionary compilation.

**a.** Preparing an adequate digitalized version of the Mansi texts first published by Bernát Munkácsi in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century – in cooperation with the University of Vienna

As it is well-known one of the oldest, systematically collected, comprehensive material of Mansi is the collection of Bernát Munkácsi's texts of Vogul (Mansi) folk poetry (Vogul Népköltési Gyűjtemény), published in 1892-1902 and in 1910-1921 with linguistic, textual and folklore commentaries. No further editions were published in the meantime, i.e. the printed versions of these texts are unavailable today. Samples were published with English translation occasionally (e.g. Vogul Folklore by Bernát Munkácsi, Otto J. Von Sadvoszky, Mihály Hoppal, and Balint Sebestyen, 1995). The digitalized version of Northern texts is prepared in Budapest and Szeged recently. Western, Eastern and Southern texts should be digitalized. The texts themselves are written using an outdated system of notation and the translation provided is in Hungarian. It would be of great help for Mansi Studies to transliterate the texts using a modern, unified system, gloss them and give a morphological analysis. An English translation would be given. Within the framework of this project a good portion of the collection could be made available to the scholarly world.

**b.** Digitalized version of Munkácsi-Kálmán's Wogulisches Wörterbuch (Budapest, 1986, 950 pp.).

For the time being Vogul (Mansi) Dictionary is the only comprehensive dictionary of the Mansi language. It is based on the texts of Bernát Munkácsi and was edited by Béla Kálmán. The equivalents of the Mansi words are given in Hungarian and in German accompanied by rich text examples. The electronic version should serve the aims of the Ob-Ugric etymological dictionary, too.

**c.** Digitalized version of V. Černetsov's archive material on Mansi with English translation

V. Černetsov's Mansi archive materials – its Russian translation was published earlier in Russia but the original texts not – arrived to Hungary typewritten by Éva Schmidt, the late outstanding Ob-Ugrist. Her Hungarian translations were nearly completed. Prof. Skribnik in Munich has also copies of V. Černetsov's original manuscripts. These exceptionally important texts should be digitalized, and translated into English by the Hungarian group in cooperation with Munich.

**d.** Syntax: Typological description of Khanty and Mansi conditional constructions with special reference to topic and focus position

Thanks to earlier descriptions of Timothy Riese (member of the Austrian research team) the basic properties of Khanty and Mansi conditional constructions are known already. These analyses were based on older folk texts of Bernát Munkácsi and Artturi Kannisto / Matti Liimola, and they did not pursue the aim to clear up the interrelations between syntactic structure and information structure of conditional sentences, so that much is left to be done in this respect. As a part of a wider study on the typological characteristics of conditional constructions in the Uralic languages, a deeper insight concerning the Ob-Ugric languages seems to be necessary by the help of more modern materials gained by fieldwork. Regarding the fact that syntactically marked constructions are to be considered as later developments, historical aspects of the question is planned to be touched upon, too. At the same time this research is planned to be a contribution to the newly organized Uralic Typological Database.

**e.** Cooperation with works on Ob-Ugric etymological dictionary, and grammatical analysis of texts

As the most comprehensive etymological dictionary of Uralic languages, "Uralisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch" [Rédei, Károly (Hg.) 1986-1989] was compiled in Budapest (in a regular cooperation with the editors of DEWOS, i.e. what concerns the etymologies of Ob-Ugric words), there is a good tradition of etymological researches in Budapest. The last etymological compilation of Ob-Ugric by Honti was published in 1982, and many of its result must be revoked. Phonological and

phonotactic researches (e.g. history of Ob-Ugric syllable structures), and lexical analysis of Ob-Ugric languages (e.g. secondary correspondences in etymologies dating back to Ob-Ugric) is planned to be a contribution to the Ob-Ugric etymological dictionary. Concerning the grammatical analysis of Khanty and Mansi texts, the cooperation of experienced specialists in Budapest (Mária Sipos Ph.D.) and Szeged (Katalin Sipőcz Ph.D.) is ensured.

#### **b) Methodologies/experiments**

In editing the Mansi language material, the Szeged team will cooperate closely with other work groups. Principles of notation, glossing and translation will be agreed upon and synchronized with international examples of best practice (such as, for instance, the Leipzig Glossing Rules). This will probably need a thorough discussion of certain questions of Ob-Ugric phonology, morphology and syntax and also result in minor specific studies. In publishing the material proper, as well as results of possible spin-off studies, the team will follow the principles of Open Access Policy.

The framework of the syntactic description will concentrate on the information structure of the sentence on the one hand, and on the most important parameters necessary for their typological description on the other. A special attention will be paid to the validity of the principle of “conditionals are topics” in the case of Ob-Ugric constructions.

#### **c) Work plan**

PhD student, year 1–3:

- supervising student assistants in scanning and/or typing the text/dictionary material
- proofreading and glossing typed texts
- preparing raw translations and commentaries

Student assistants, year 1–3:

- scanning and/or typing the text/dictionary material
- assisting the team in other technical duties, in particular in organizing the conference in Budapest

PI 2 (Marianne Bakró-Nagy – Budapest/Szeged)

- year 1: compiling a detailed work plan
- year 1–3: supervising the work of the Budapest/Szeged team, preparing the final versions of the edited material, preparing the syntactic description

Co-PI 2 (Katalin Sipőcz - Szeged), year 1–3:

- assisting Co-PI 1 in the supervision of the team’s work, preparing the final versions of the edited material (Munkácsi’s texts and dictionary)

Co-PI 2 (Mária Sipos - Budapest), year 1–3:

- assisting the preparation of etymological dictionary

#### **d) Deliverables and/or milestones**

The main result of the Budapest/Szeged team will be a digital text publication of Munkácsi-Kálmán’s dictionary, and providing an adequate description of Ob-Ugric syntactic constructions with special reference to conditional constructions. These will be planned and performed in close cooperation with the other work groups, by way of constant electronic communication and yearly conferences, one of which (winter 2011) will be hosted in Budapest. The Budapest/Szeged team will also coordinate the cooperation of the whole project with three related projects (see 3. below), producing valuable synergic effects.

#### **e) Justification for budget items, especially staff costs and equipment.**

The Szeged team will need one full position for a competent researcher, under the supervision of Professor Marianne Bakró-Nagy, to assume the main workload in the editing and digitalizing of the materials. For technical assistance (scanning the texts etc.), student assistants (10 h per week) will be needed. The project members can use the infrastructure of the University of Szeged and the Research Institute for Linguistics, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, but for the processing of the text material, a computer and a scanner will be needed.