EuroBABEL Ob-Ugric in Vienna

Short description of the Individual Project in Vienna (part of the EUROCORES/EuroBABEL collaborative research project "Ob-Ugric languages: conceptual structures, lexicon, constructions, categories") / Johanna Laakso, 15 September 2008

Project aims and methods
The Vienna team will concentrate on two specific areas of descriptive resources:
a) Compilation of adequate and accessible teaching materials for the Mansi language.
For researchers interested in the Mansi language the almost total lack of teaching materials has always presented a serious problem. There are only two true textbooks available (Balandin 1960 and Skribnik & Afanasjeva 2004). Both of these are written in Russian and thus inaccessible for many Western linguists. Balandin's book is written with an outdated orthography, and the book of Skribnik/Afanasjeva is far less thorough than the older book written by Balandin. The Vienna team will translate Balandin's book into English and at the same time adapt and expand the grammar, creating a new and thoroughly revised version. The shorter textbook by Skribnik/Afanasjeva will also be translated into English.
b) Preparing an adequate digitalized version of the Mansi texts first published by Bernát Munkácsi.
A keystone of Mansi studies is the text collection in four volumes *Vogul népköltési gyűjtemény* 'Mansi Collection of Folk Literature' by Bernát Munkácsi published between 1892 and 1896. This work was never republished and is not readily available to scholars. The texts themselves are written using an outdated system of notation and the translation provided is in Hungarian. The Vienna project team will re-edit as great part of the texts as possible: transliterate, gloss and translate them.

In editing the Mansi language material, the Vienna 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.

Justification for budget items
The Vienna team will need one full position for a competent researcher (postgraduate), under the supervision of Professor Riese, to assume the main workload in the editing and digitalizing of the materials. For technical assistance (scanning the texts etc.), a student assistant (10 h per week) will be needed. The project members can use the infrastructure of the University of Vienna (library, Internet connections and server capacity, scanning and printing facilities), but for the processing of the text material, a laptop computer (enabling the work at different places, including the department library) will be necessary.

Related projects and expected synergy effects
There will be constant cooperation and exchange of experiences and insights with the following related projects:
– Prof. Timothy Riese: editing an English-language version of a textbook of the Mari language (another Finno-Ugric minority language in Russia, similarly lacking adequate teaching material in languages other than Russian)
– Prof. Johanna Laakso and Prof. Timothy Riese: research project dealing with the typology of negation in Ob-Ugric and Samoyed languages, funded by the FWF (P20498-G03; http://www.univie.ac.at/finno-ugristik/projekt-negation.html); the project draws its material partly from the same languages and also involves linguistic fieldwork and compilation of digital resources (corpora with glosses and translations)
– Prof. Johanna Laakso: international research consortium which will apply for funding from the EU FP7, in order to develop a measurement instrument for a more fine-grained analysis and evaluation of the state of European minority languages
– Prof. Johanna Laakso: Handbook of Uralic Syntax (see IP Munich) and the Uralic Typology Database (http://www.univie.ac.at/urtypol/), both of which will both profit from the empirical results of the planned Ob-Ugric project and produce relevant experiences and theoretical insights

Addition to project abstract, as of September 2009:
The FP7 research project consortium now has a website at
http://www.univie.ac.at/eldia-project/