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ABOUT MANSI — IN MANSI

Abstract. The aim of this paper is to show where and what can be read in Mansi about the current situation and use of the Mansi language. We investigate articles in the Mansi newspaper Лүимă сѣрипос [Lūimă Sēripos] which discuss the usage of the mother tongue, the situation of minority peoples and languages, the education in Mansi and in other minority languages, and the application of modern technologies in the preservation of the Mansi language. We analyse thematically related topics that characterize the articles of this newspaper. Finally, we also discuss whether some kind of sociolinguistic terminology related to the issue of language endangerment can be observed in these Mansi texts.

Keywords: Mansi language, Лүимă сѣрипос [Lūimă Sēripos], language shift, language revitalization.

1. The main sociolinguistic characteristics of the Mansi language

1.1. Demographic data

Based on the demographic data, we can conclude that the population of Mansi — more precisely, the number of people who identify themselves as Mansi — shows a small increase during the 20th century and this trend continued in the 21st century. A similar trend can be observed regarding the other Uralic ethnic groups living in Siberia (e.g. Khanty, Nenets), while the other Uralic peoples in Russia are characterized by a continuous decline in population. The latest census data show, that this growth has stopped in the case of the Mansi, but it continues for the Nenets and the Khanty. It can be assumed that this population growth mainly means a change in attitude. Previously belonging to minority nationalities could only mean a disadvantage; this situation has fundamentally changed since the 1990s. According to the latest census, 90% (10,065) of the 12,228 Mansi people lived in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District, where they make up only 0.64% of the population (Pusztay 2023).

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Table 1

The population of Mansi from 1926 according to the census data

year	1926	1939	1959	1970	1979	1989	2002	2010	2021
Mansi	~5.800	~ 6.300	~ 6.300	7.609	7.434	8.279	11.432	12.269	12.228

(Source: <http://www.perepis2002.ru/>; Pusztay 2006: 93–94; 2023)

However, the numbers regarding language skills (Table 2) show a picture opposite to the previous data until 2020. The number of speakers of all Uralic languages in Russia was constantly decreasing, and the same was true for those living in Siberia. The language use of Mansi also decreased drastically: while in 1989 37% spoke their mother tongue, in 2002 this proportion was around 24%, and by 2010 the decrease was even stronger (7.6%). Practically everyone speaks Russian, so the smaller part of the Mansi are bilingual Russian-Mansi speakers, and the majority of them are typically monolingual speakers of Russian. However, according to the latest census, there was a turning point for the Uralic peoples in this respect. The data of the 2020 census shows an increase in the mother tongue use in the case of more — not only Siberian — Uralic peoples. In 2020, 2,229 people declared that they had Mansi as their mother tongue (18% of the people of Mansi nationality) — a total of 2,004 people using the Mansi language live in Yugra, most of them in villages (1,455 people). 1,346 people declared that they know Mansi (11%), and 1,008 declared that they use it (8.2%)¹ (Pusztay 2023).

This positive trend raises many questions, most of which we cannot answer yet. The census results have only just become known, and the evaluation and explanation of the results will only appear later on the various forums. In any case, it cannot be ruled out that a more positive attitude towards native language and nationality, which has been observed since the 1990s, in the case of the Ob-Ugrians strengthens the positive attitude towards mother tongue use.

Table 2

Census data on language skills (2020)

Ethnic Mansi	12,308
Having Mansi as their mother tongue	2,229
Having proficiency in Mansi	1,346
Using Mansi	1,008

(Source: Pusztay 2023; https://rosstat.gov.ru/vpn/2020/Tom5_Nacionalnyj_sostav_i_vladienie_yazykami)

1.2. The situation of the Mansi language in the 21st century

The changes in Russia that began in the 1990s created new opportunities for the smaller Uralic languages. In the past two decades, a kind of cultural and ethnic renewal has been experienced among the Mansi, institutions and organizations have been founded, cultural and educational institutions have been created, the purpose of which is to preserve and boost ethnic culture and the

¹ The census separates these categories as follows: "Численность лиц, владеющих соответствующим языком" / "из них используют его в повседневной жизни". (https://rosstat.gov.ru/vpn/2020/Tom5_Nacionalnyj_sostav_i_vladienie_yazykami).

Mansi language. Progress has also been made in the field of mother tongue education. According to data from 2011, 453 children in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District, and 423 in 2012, studied Mansi language as an optional subject (Horváth 2014). The experience of recent years shows that young people's attitude towards the mother tongue has become more positive, and this — as we have seen — is also supported by the latest census results. However, 1–2 hours of language learning per week can hardly mean radical changes in their language use. These children learn the Mansi language practically as a foreign language. The obsolescence and methodological shortcomings of the textbooks are a problem, because according to previous practices, the textbooks assume existing language skills, which today's Mansi schoolchildren no longer possess. There is a need for textbooks and methods that take into account that for Mansi children present day Mansi is more a heritage language than the mother tongue, or even a foreign language.

Initially at the Yugra State University in Khanty-Mansiysk, founded in 2001, there was an Institute of Ob-Ugric languages including the Department of Mansi language, but this institute was closed at the beginning of the 2010s. After that, the Institute of Northern Peoples was established, which no longer offered the possibility of studying Mansi or Khanty. (Bíró, Sipőcz 2017) The Mansi research group of the Ob-Ugric Institute of Applied Researches and Development, founded in 1991, continuously conducts fieldwork, collects language materials, prepares text editions, archives, new textbooks and methodological materials and is currently working on building a Mansi language corpus.

In Khanty-Mansiysk, new possibilities of leisure activities have also appeared where the role of the mother tongue is important. One of them is the Ob-Ugric ethnocultural youth centre *Lilij Sojum* ('Living Stream'), where children can get acquainted with their native traditions and languages. The other is the Ob-Ugric Theatre, with plays related to the traditional Ob-Ugric culture presented mainly in Russian, but occasionally also in Khanty and Mansi.

1.3. The domains of Mansi language use

Mansi has never functioned as an official language neither in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District, nor elsewhere. It has not had an official status in the offices, in politics, in legislation. Mansi has a marginal role also in the linguistic landscape of Khanty-Mansiysk (Horváth 2016). The main domain where the speakers use their mother tongue has always been home and family, and Mansi has also been present in education, although decreasingly for decades. Mansi is about to be excluded even from the family domain together with the decreasing number of the speakers during the last decades.

As a result of the successful revitalization tendencies, however, the appearance of Mansi can be observed in new domains (cf. alternative educational institutes, institutions for maintaining the traditional Ob-Ugric culture, newer research institutes). Thanks to the above mentioned organizations the children and young ones endeavour to learn Mansi as a heritage language, and this was not typical earlier. In some cases revitalizing and maintaining the culture and the traditions means the revitalization of a certain vocabulary as well. Using Mansi on the internet can be considered a new phenomenon and a new domain of language use. The Mansi users of the popular social networking sites send messages to each-other in Mansi and also to their non-Mansi friends who study

or investigate the Mansi language (Horváth 2016; 2017). Naturally, all of this does not mean the everyday use of Mansi but by all means it shows a rise in the prestige of the language.

Thus, it is a question of the future if these revitalization processes can result in more than the maintenance of the language use connected to the traditions and basic situations (like greetings, small talk etc.). That is, it is difficult to predict whether it is possible to improve the vocabulary and the language so that it meets the requirements of modern life and whether it is possible to broaden the domains of the language use. We cannot answer these questions at the moment. Our paper aims at examining a special part of the use and possible improvement of the vocabulary, namely examining the Mansi language expressing the questions and issues connected to the use of the mother tongue.

2. Recent publications in Mansi

The number of publications in Mansi has shown a remarkable increase in the last two decades, although concerning their subject, these publications are quite of the same type. They are typically folklore texts, partly reprints of texts published earlier and partly materials from newer fieldworks. Besides this, newer textbooks were also published which, similarly to the previously published ones, mostly contain tales and also texts translated from Russian.² Literature in Mansi has been scarcely published in the latest decades,³ and there are no translations into Mansi either, except for the translations from the Bible and the novel "The Little Prince", which has recently been translated into several Finno-Ugric languages. As far as we know, there are hardly any academic papers published in Mansi,⁴ and there are no linguistic works. Besides the publications in Russia, texts in Mansi mainly have been digitally published abroad in the past few years but these are typically the digitized versions of texts published before which are the parts of databases being created in the frames of different projects.⁵

Practically, the only forum where writings connected to the issues of language use can be found in Mansi is the Mansi newspaper *Лүймә сэрпос* [*Lūimā Sēripos*], which appears biweekly. As the only regularly appearing source in Mansi it is an essential forum which has an effect on the language use, too (cf. Bíró, Sipőcz 2009). Besides the press, the presence of the Mansi language in other media must also be mentioned. News programs on the television and on the radio which are broadcasted several times a week are, however, more meagre concerning their thematics than the writings published in the press (Horváth 2017). Although it cannot be excluded that in these programs the issue of the use and situation of the Mansi language is discussed, since our

² Horváth (2017) mentions newer textbooks and educational materials as well as materials and methods prepared for alternative language teaching. Their important novelty is that they treat the Mansi language as a sort of heritage language. According to the homepage of the Ob-Ugric Institute of Applied Researches and Development a textbook of mathematics was also published in Mansi.

³ Still, a few examples can be mentioned: Динисламова 2007; 2017; Gyinyiszlamova 2008; Бахтиярова 2017; 2020.

⁴ As rare exceptions one may mention Динисламова 2015 and Ромбандеева 2004.

⁵ Cf. <http://www.babel.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/>; http://www.babel.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/index.php?abfrage=welcome_oudb&navi=about_oudb.

paper is based only on written sources, the examination of the material in Mansi appearing on the television and on the radio is not part of our objectives.

Lūimā Sēripos has been published since 11.2.1989 every fortnight. At first it consisted of only two black-and-white pages but nowadays it has been expanded into 16 colourful pages and it has also been published on the internet since 2012 (<http://www.khanty-yasang.ru/frontpage>). The newspaper is published with a circulation of 1710, it can be ordered, it has 1154 subscribers and its prize is "free", according to the description (cf. LS 2023/6). On its first pages political news and news concerning the public life in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District can be found which are followed by writings on various topics related to the life of the Mansi. The main sections are the following: *laχχalət* 'news', *kūśajit rūpatanəl* 'the work of our leaders', *sossaŋ mir kultura* 'the culture of the indigenous peoples', *sossaŋ mir olupsa* 'the life of the indigenous people', *pawləŋ mir olupsa* 'the life of the people in the villages', *ńāwramət māyas* 'for children', *χañáštap* 'studying', *rūtiy olne mirət* 'related nations', *janiypāla χotpat janitlijamuw* 'we congratulate old people', *ūjχul janmaltan wārmal* 'animal husbandry', *kasne wārmal* 'entertainment' etc.⁶ The sections are not exactly the same in every issue and sometimes there can appear other sections, too, but the above mentioned sections can be considered the most general ones. Articles connected to the mother tongue can occur in any section therefore the source of our examination were the issues published in 2015, 2016, 2019 and 2023⁷ and we took into account every article.

3. Issues related to the language grouped by their thematics

Articles that are relevant for our investigation are not typical of certain sections or articles with certain topics — as has been mentioned before — but they can occur in any section or in any kind of article. There are some sections and typical articles, however, which contain topics and statements related to the mother tongue more frequently than others. These are the following: 1. Life stories; 2. Accounts of events (meetings, festivals, competitions etc.); 3. Publishing reports, book presentations; 4. Articles dealing with Finno-Ugric and with other (endangered) languages; 5. Articles on education.

3.1. Life stories

Articles presenting somebody's life story touch upon the question of the mother tongue generally from three aspects: speaking about the language use in inter-ethnic marriages, presenting people who used to speak Mansi in their childhood but later they forgot it or presenting people who have preserved their knowledge of Mansi and use their mother tongue actively also nowadays.

Speaking about the language use in inter-ethnic marriages — generally between a Mansi woman and her Russian husband (or sometimes the husband

⁶ The Mansi literary language and thus, also *Lūimā Sēripos* uses the Cyrillic alphabet. In our paper Mansi data is presented in a transcription using the Latin alphabet and the Finno-Ugric transcription (cf. Kálmán 1976 : 35).

⁷ We have analysed the issues of 2015 and 2016 in a previous presentation (Bíró, Sipócz 2017), for the present paper we have also included newer issues, namely the issues of 2019 and 2023. Our reason for choosing the issues of 2019 was that this year was the International Year of Indigenous Languages therefore we assumed that the topic of the mother tongue would appear more frequently in the press of 2019.

is of another minority nationality) — both positive and negative examples can be found in the newspaper. Among the positive ones we can mention the Mansi woman who speaks only in Mansi with her Mansi relatives and her youngest child and although the child replies to her sometimes in Mansi and sometimes in Russian, according to the mother he understands Mansi well (LS 2016/13). Another positive example is represented in a letter to the editor sent by a 9-year-old girl from the village of *Naxsamvol'*. The girl's parents belong to two Finno-Ugric minorities: her mother is a Mansi teacher and her father is a Komi fisherman and hunter. The girl herself does not speak Mansi but she has a positive attitude towards the language. When she writes about her mother talking with a relative only in Mansi she comments this fact like this: *mān tēnatēn tup χūntlēw: saka nōtney tēn potrēn ōli* 'we are just listening to them, their talking/tongue is very nice' (LS 2015/1 : 10). In inter-ethnic marriages between people of different minorities sometimes none of the minority languages is used. A good example of this is the story of a Mansi woman who had a Khanty husband but with their children they both spoke only in Russian. It has to be mentioned, though, that by her own admission the woman herself cannot speak Mansi, she only understands the language and because of this "her heart is aching" (LS 2016/11 : 16).

The question of the use of the mother tongue is understandably important in the cases of those who used to live in a Mansi speaking community in their childhood but later — for several reasons — forgot their mother tongue. We can mention the story of a woman from the village of *Igrim* for instance, who ceased to speak Mansi after her parents' death, and thus, nowadays she only understands the language but cannot speak it (her younger sister, however, still speaks Mansi) (LS 2016/11 : 13). A somewhat more positive story is told in a letter to the editor sent by a 62-year-old woman. The woman was born in the village of *Anja* where she spoke only Mansi with her parents and the villagers. She started to learn Russian only at school (from 3rd grade on) and later she was sent to a boarding school for two years. Then she studied in a teacher training college in Khanty-Mansiysk, where she still studied Mansi. After finishing school, however, she did not use her mother tongue anymore because she moved to another district where she has been living since then (for almost 40 years) with her husband who belongs to another minority. As a result, she almost forgot her mother tongue and when she visited her birth place again, she realized that she could hardly understand Mansi any longer (at the same time she also found that there have remained very few Mansi speaking people in the village). Fortunately, she found *Lūimā Sēripōs*, and thanks to the newspaper, she started to read and think in her mother tongue again. She organized that the newspaper would be sent to her regularly (outside of the district) and she is pleased to tell that now she reads the whole paper and understands it well. Thus, she "relearned" her mother tongue with the help of the newspaper and therefore she expresses her gratitude to the editors of the paper (LS 2015/9 : 15). Her letter, however, was not written in Mansi but was translated by the staff of the newspaper.

Finally, the question of the mother tongue appears in life stories of such people who have preserved their knowledge of Mansi. We can mention the story of a young woman, for example, who lives in the forest with her two sons leading a traditional life. She had a Khanty husband but he has died. According to the woman, both her sons understand Khanty and the older can

also speak a little. She herself still speaks Mansi well: *Am šān lātjūm jomśakw wāylum, školan minnem mus ruś lātjəl at potərtasum* 'I know my mother tongue well; I did not speak Russian until I went to school' (LS 2015/1 : 11) Concerning the stories belonging here we have to mention one particular issue of the newspaper which understandably contains several articles on people who still speak their mother tongue well. This is the 2019/3 issue which is mainly dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the newspaper's first publication. In this issue there are several articles presenting the history of the newspaper and presenting people who used to work or have been working for the newspaper or used to send or still have been sending writings for it. These people, naturally, know their mother tongue well and generally have taken part actively in preserving the language. For example they taught Mansi, translated Russian tales and poems into Mansi, wrote study programmes, textbooks and other necessary literature for the teaching of Mansi in schools, colleges and the university in the district, created a language nest in a kindergarten or worked in the Ob-Ugric Institute of Applied Researches and Development (LS 2019/3 : 9–10). Regarding a colleague who used to work for the newspaper but now works in the Ob-Ugric Institute of Applied Researches and Development, the author of the article states the following: *Anna takwi lātəje saka jomśakw wāyte, ti konipal ruś lātəjəl ōs māńsi lātəjəl χansunjewe unīversitett χāńištaxtas. Tajimāyas taw potrane lowińtanjewe saka kūpńit, jomas ōs pūmís, šar māk māńsi širəl ōlējət* 'Anna knows her own language very well, and besides this, she studied Russian and Mansi at the university. Therefore to read her writings is very easy, good and enjoyable, they are in real Mansi, indeed [i.e. they represent the real Mansi language]' (LS 2019/3 : 10). Besides this, the woman also speaks Mansi at home with her Mansi husband and their children who themselves also speak and understand the language well.

3.2. Accounts of events

The topic of the mother tongue often appears in articles about meetings, conferences, festivals and competitions. The importance of preserving the mother tongue is present for example in an article reporting on the meeting of the Mansi and Khanty newspapers' editors. The journalists were talking about their mother tongues, too, which they had the opportunity to learn as a child. Sofia Onina, the former Khanty language assistant of Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, emphasized that these minority languages are being taught, studied and honoured abroad, and drew attention to the importance of linguistic diversity (LS 2016/16 : 4). The issue of teaching of Siberian minority languages occurred also in the conference "The traditional and innovative ways of improving and preserving the indigenous minority languages of the North" held at the Herzen Institute in Saint Petersburg: *Igor Brodskij lāwme širəl, mošərtən lūimā māχum lātjanəl ul mōt χōn māχum lātjanəl širəl tup školatt os unīversitetətt χāńištanjewe patawet. Tajimāyas māńlat χōtpat akway matarəl pūmsalanjewe ērējət* 'As Igor Brodskij says, languages of the Northern people will soon be taught only in schools and at universities, similarly to other languages. Therefore the interest of the young people should be upheld continuously' (LS 2015/9 : 7).

We can also mention an article about an international meeting on education where Mansi and Khanty were talking about the significance of the mother

tongue and claiming that there is a need for a programme for teaching these languages (LS 2023/5 : 4–5). Finally, we can cite the article on a scientific coordination meeting dealing with indigenous peoples' culture and languages held in Khanty-Mansiysk. During the meeting one of the participants stated that everybody knows that their mother tongue is at the verge of extinction and nowadays people do not talk the way like people used to talk earlier. He warned the other participants that the number of elderly people who still know the language becomes less and less every year, therefore the task of the participants of the meeting is to write down all stories, songs and tales as soon as possible. After that, the director of the Ob-Ugric Institute of Applied Researches and Development spoke about the huge work going on in their institute, where the old tales, stories and songs of the Mansi and Khanty are being collected and elaborated. The researchers have collected data from more than 500 persons and have digitalized more than 4000 hours of this data: *Mōjtət, potrət os ērvət jol-χansijanəl. Tuwəl sāvšir isχipəŋ utit χosət tānanəl mūsχal širəl šōpitijanəl, nēpakət wārijanəl* 'Tales, stories and songs are written down. Then they are properly/thoroughly processed with various digital devices and published as books' (LS 2015/9 : 4).

Besides meetings and conferences, the topic of the mother tongue occurs in festivals, too. One of the articles for example reports on "The Day of the Indigenous People" and mentions important Mansi and Khanty persons. The thought that children need to hear their mother tongue at home and that at home the mother tongue should be used also appears in this article: "the mother tongue must not be forgotten since this is the most important thing". It is also emphasized that the youth centre *Lilin Sojum* and the Ob-Ugric Theatre should be supported, and the importance of preserving the traditional way of life is underlined ("people should live in the old way at the old places and then the language will sound again") (LS 2016/16 : 5).

It can be considered surprising, though, that there are several articles reporting on different festivals and events where the topic of the mother tongue would be expected, yet these articles do not contain any language related issues. Among these we can mention the articles on such events as the 3rd Finno-Ugric Festival (2016/16), the celebration of the mother tongue (2016/16), the meeting of the Finno-Ugric Writers in Cluj-Napoca (2019/17 : 6) or the celebration of the 200th anniversary of Antal Reguly's birth in Zirc, Hungary (2019/14 : 6–7).

Finally, among the events we have to mention the different competitions since in connection with these, remarks on the mother tongue also appear. Naturally, this is the case in an article on a mother tongue competition organized in Khanty-Mansiysk. According to this article, the participants of the competition mainly came from the villages (before the final, qualifying rounds were held), and only one boy, who is studying at *Lilin Sojum*, came from the capital. (On the basis of this it seems that minority languages have been preserved better in the villages than in the cities.) The participants of the competition had to write down a "real" speech but they were allowed to use a dictionary. The winners got a money award, too. (LS 2015/3 : 8) Another competition that should be mentioned was organized last year and lasted for several months. Participants could record and send videos of themselves telling Khanty and Mansi tales. Some of the tales were told in Mansi or Khanty (in different dialects), but there also were tales told in Russian.

The competition had only a Russian name: *Таёжные сказки* ('taiga tales') (LS 2023/1 : 7).

3.3. Publishing reports and book presentations

The issue of the mother tongue appears also in articles on the publication of new books or in book presentations. One of the articles, for example, informs us that the Mansi data collected by Vladimir Černecov in 1939 was published by the Ob-Ugric Institute of Applied Researches and Development. Another article reports that besides old folklore texts (e.g. the materials collected by Bernát Munkácsi) also new field-work materials as well as textbooks were published. The article emphasizes the importance of the accuracy in writing: it is important which type of print is used and it is also important to mark the long vowels as well as to retain characteristics of the dialects. Besides the writing, the importance of making sound-recordings and the archiving of these is also mentioned.

3.4. Articles dealing with Finno-Ugric languages and with other (endangered) languages

In the newspaper there are regularly reports on Finno-Ugric events, congresses, conferences and meetings, and in these reports the issue of the mother tongue (and also the issue of other small Finno-Ugric or non-Finno-Ugric languages) appears sometimes. The thought that these small, minority languages are known, being learnt and being appreciated abroad is present in those articles several times (e.g. LS 2015/9 : 7; LS 2016/13). Besides the Mansi language, Khanty and Nenets are often mentioned. Apart from these, mainly the following Finno-Ugric languages appeared in our corpus concerning the topic of language use: Udmurt, Komi, Mari, Estonian, Enets, and Nganasan. Articles dealing with other, non-Finno-Ugric endangered languages and people also occur, e.g. articles on Khakas, Hebrew, Maori, or Kyrgyz. The situation of the Khakas language, for example, appears in an article about a Khakas teacher. She teaches children to speak in Khakas. She herself has three children all of whom speak their mother tongue. In the teacher's opinion the problem is that many people speaking a minority language do not want to use their mother tongue because they are ashamed of it. But if the children do not know their mother tongue then the nation will "lose its way". Finally she warns the Khakas people: *mān ōs mośśay χul'tum miriγ lowińtaxtuńkw patēw* 'slowly we will also be considered one of the small numbered peoples' (LS 2015/2 : 13).

3.5. Articles on education

Articles on education have their own section in the newspaper (*χαιńśtap* 'studying'). Such articles are quite frequent but they seldom mention the issue of Mansi language education. There are articles, for example, on the beginning of the new academic year containing statistics and data, or on the facilities of certain schools, or on the electronic class register but without a single word about mother tongue education (LS 2016/16, LS 2023/5). On the basis of the articles, mainly the traditional culture is being preserved

and transferred (with songs, dances and handicrafts), not necessarily together with the mother tongue. If the question of the mother tongue education is mentioned then it is stated that children generally have a very weak knowledge of Mansi (or none at all): *Sārtinnuw χańístaxtəm āyit-piyət taj māńsí lātəŋ wāsət* '(Earlier) Pupils used to know Mansi' (LS 2015/2) At a meeting held in the Ob-Ugric Institute of Applied Researches and Development the teachers complained that the mother tongue class held as an afternoon session is not popular with school children, and instead they choose another class held during school hours (LS 2023/5 : 2).

On the basis of the articles on education it can be concluded that both the negative (e.g. LS 2015/18 : 2), and the positive (e.g. LS 2015/2 : 8–9) attitude towards learning the mother tongue appears.

4. Terminology connected to the language use and language situation

On the basis of the analysed texts, it can be established that a kind of terminology has developed in Mansi, which is connected to language use and language situation. It can be observed that most of the terms appearing in this context are innovations using Mansi elements. These expressions show the efforts of journalists to create new Mansi lexemes and expressions for new phenomena. It is not a broad linguistic and sociolinguistic terminology consisting of many elements; we can talk about only a smaller vocabulary that shows consistent use. It is difficult to judge to which degree these lexemes and expressions are used and known among the native speakers of Mansi. Since the domains of use of the Mansi language are quite limited (see above), Mansi is spoken mainly at home in the family. We can hardly assume that Mansi would be used in scientific or political or other official forums. However, the use of the mother tongue is a conceivable topic at home, as are mother tongue education and the process of forgetting the mother tongue. Thus, it cannot be excluded that the lexemes and expressions presented below can be heard — at least partially — during conversations on such topics.

The Mansi designation for the 'mother tongue' appeared frequently in *Lūimā Sēripos* in several forms, cf.: *śāń-aś lātəŋ* 'mother tongue' ('mother-father' + 'language'), *śāń lātəŋ* 'id.' ('mother' + 'language').⁸ This is not an innovation, the word existed before. Likewise, the increasingly common term *sossaŋ mir* ~ *sossaŋ māxum* for the Ob-Ugric peoples, and more generally for indigenous peoples (cf. *sossa* 'local, native' (cf. WW 566) + *mir*, *māχum* 'people, folk') is not an innovation either. *Sossaŋ mir kultura* 'Culture of indigenous peoples' is one of the column titles of *Lūimā Sēripos*, and it is also found in the name of the commemorative day of indigenous peoples: *mā janitəl ōlne sossaŋ mirət jalpəŋ χōtal* 'indigenous peoples' international day' ("holiday of indigenous peoples living around the world").

Language loss and language shift are the topics of numerous articles, the verb *joruvli* 'forget', *joruvlaχti* 'be forgotten' is used in Mansi to name this phenomenon, cf. *lātəŋət joruvlaχtēγət* 'language loss' ("languages are forgotten"). In connection with language death, a euphemistic term was used in our source, similarly to human death: *lātəŋ χottal' sojmi* ~ *χot-sojmi* 'the language dies out' ("the language disappears somewhere"), cf. *sojmi* 'disappear, wind down' (WW

⁸ These Mansi terms are not completely equivalent with the European understanding of mother tongue, but are closer to the Russian concept of *родной язык* 'native language'.

556). To name the opposite process the expression *śāñ lātəjanəl ēlal' totijanəl* 'they carry on language maintenance' ('they take forward their mother tongue') occurred. Persons who engage in the revitalization of the language and culture are called *śāñ lātəjət os pēs jis nakət ēlal' totne χōtəpat* ('people who take forward native languages and old things') or *mośśay χultəm mirət ūrɣalan χum* ('person who protects endangered peoples'). In connection with language loss, the expression *mośśay χultəm mir* 'endangered ethnic group' ('a reduced folk') is common, as is *māñlat māχum* 'minority people' ('small folk').

The names for several events dealing with language and culture are usually formed with the deverbal noun suffix *-p*, cf.: *χañištəp* 'training' (< *χañišt-* 'to teach'), *χontχatəɣlap* 'meeting' (< *χontχat-* 'to meet'), *sussəltəp* 'presentation' (< *sussəlt-* 'to show'). In the case of various celebrations and notable periods, we often find that both the Russian and the Mansi name are present in the article, cf.: *Mā janitəl wōrtur ētpos 9 χōtalet mośśay χultəm mirət janətlawet ~ Международный день коренных народов мир* 'the Native Peoples' Day is on the 9th of August'; *sossa mirət śāñ lātəjanəl janətlan mirχal tal ~ Международное десятилетие языков коренных народов мира* 'International Decade of the Mother Tongue of Indigenous Peoples' etc.

Similarly, for the designation of the language nest, we encountered the adoption of the Russian term (e.g. LS 2019/3 : 9): «*Jazykovoje gnezdo*» *nampa proekt* 'a project called "Language nest" (Russ.)'. However, the concept was explained in Mansi: *Śar ōwəl porat ti wārmal' χōn mānəl tiy totwes. Ti jilpi t'ela śirəl, nāwramət lātəj wāne χōtəpat jot śāñ lātəjəl potramēɣət. Tajimāɣəs tānki lātəjanəl mol'aχ χañištijanəl.* 'For the first time, this thing was imported from abroad. According to this new thing, children use their mother tongue with people who know the language. This way they slowly learn their mother tongue.'

The preservation of language and culture is linked to the newer tools of information technology at many points, and a small set of terms has already formed in Mansi. The process of language documentation was usually characterized by describing the activities, cf. for example: *mōjtət, potrət os ērɣət jol-χansijanəl* 'tales, stories and songs are written down'. In the description of the digitization process, the name *isχipəj ut* 'internet, applications, computer program etc.' (lit. 'magical thing') was mentioned in several places, which is an interesting example of a neologism. Cf.: *sāwsir isχipəj utət χosət tānanəl mūsχal śirəl śōpitijanəl, nēpakət wārijanəl* '(the written texts) are properly/thoroughly processed with various digital devices and published as books'. The name of the website is *isχipəj utət lōps* (*lōps* 'piece of canvas, sheet').

In an article (LS 2023/5 : 2) about digitalization and corpus building currently taking place at the Ob-Ugric Institute of Applied Researches and Development the word 'language corpus' is in Russian, but the work and its results are already explained in Mansi: *Māñsi lātəjət isχipəj utət akw mān χasne [---] Ti wārmal' ruś lātəjəl «lingwist'ičeskij corpus» lāwawe. Tuw pussən māñsi lātəjət χansuŋkwe patawet os kāsəj lātəj ruś lātəjən tolmaślawe, toχ Jandeks-ma-šina māñsi lātəj wāŋkwe pati os tolmaślanŋkwe wērmī* 'The collection of Mansi words in one place on the internet [---] This thing is called "language corpus" (Russ.) in Russian. Every Mansi word is entered and every word is translated into Russian, and then the Yandex machine starts to know the Mansi language and will be able to translate it' (LS 2023/5 : 2)

Online participation is also mentioned in an article (LS 2023/5 : 3): *χotju-tanəl joxtalanḡkwe tiy at wērməsət, tān jujəl isχīpəḡ ut χosit rūpitasət* 'those who could not come worked remotely via internet'. The making of crow-shaped smileys shows the modern adaptation of Mansi traditions: *isχīpəḡ utət «smajlik» lāwim ūrinēkwa χurite tēnki šōpitasət* 'they made a figure of a crow-woman called smiley on computer' (LS 2023/5 : 3). In an article the online possibilities of a library book lending system were described. Moreover, we can also read about an alarm system preventing the theft of books: *biblioteka-kol āwisūntne isχīpəḡ utəl wārwas, nēpak ke tūlmantawe, taw tāra šisγuḡkwe ōwəltaxti* 'a new electronic alarm system has been installed at the entrance of the library, if someone steals a book, it sounds an alarm (it screams)' (2019/17 : 2).

Finally, it can be observed that these lexical innovations are related to latest phenomena (internet, alarm system, smiley etc.) while older terms are more often used as they are in Russian (*unīversit'et, kul'tura* etc.).

5. Conclusion

In our study we examined how the use and the situation of the Mansi language can be discussed in Mansi. Since these kinds of topics appear practically only in *Lūimā Sēripas*, the biweekly Mansi newspaper, we collected texts related to this topic by reading the issues of the newspaper from the years 2015, 2016, 2019 and 2023. The following topics of language use occurred in the examined material: linguistic diversity, language revitalization, language documentation as well as issues of language endangerment, language change and language death. The sources talked about the Mansi and mother-tongue education and about the use of other minority languages. It was a rather common, repeated statement in the writings that nowadays children no longer know or understand the Mansi language, which they should basically learn at home. Journalists have repeatedly linked the process of language loss with the abandonment of the traditional way of life and the disappearance of traditional living spheres. It is a common observation that the Mansi language is valuable for non-Mansi people (foreign researchers, students etc.). Overall, it can be said that the writings are more concerned with the preservation of the traditions, the traditional ways of life and the ancient culture than with the maintenance of the mother tongue itself. Examining the language of the sources, we detected the development of a still small terminology concerning the language situation, the language maintenance and language technology in Mansi. We cannot know, however, to what extent these terms are really used in everyday life of the community. Regarding language revitalization, this attempt could be considered successful only if it resulted in the expansion of language domains, for example the appearance of the Mansi language in scientific use.

We end our paper with a quote from an article: *Učonij māχum lāwnēnəl šīrəl, akw χotti lātəḡ χottal' sōjmi t'e, mān pussən moś nusaynuw ta jēmtapēw. Kāsəḡ mir, kāsəḡ lātəḡ tup takwi χurip pūmās matər, ērne matər ōńsi. Taji-māγəs kāsəḡ lātəḡ janitlanḡkwe ēri.* 'As scientists say, if a language dies out, we all become a little poorer. Every people, every language has its own beauty and necessity. Therefore, all languages must be respected.' (LS 2016/16 : 4).

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Abbreviations

LS — Лӯимā сѣрипос [Lūimā Sēripos 'Northern Lights']. Newspaper published in Khanty-Mansijsk. <http://www.khanty-yasang.ru/luima-seripos>; **WW** — В. М у н - к á c s i, В. К á l m á n, Wogulisches Wörterbuch, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó 1986.

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БЕРНАДЕТТ БИРО, КАТАЛИН ШИПЁЧ (Seregđ)

О МАНСИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ НА МАНСИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

Цель статьи показать, где и что можно почитать на мансийском языке о состоянии и использовании этого языка, которому в настоящее время грозит отмирание. Поскольку в мансийской газете «Лўимă сѣрипос» обычно печатаются и материалы по этой тематике, авторы статьи анализируют номера газеты за 2015, 2016, 2019 и 2023 годы. После ознакомления с социолингвистическим положением мансийского языка дан тематический анализ газетных статей, в которых рассматриваются языковые — и особенно социолингвистические — вопросы, затрагивающие непосредственно мансийский язык. И наконец, авторы отмечают в этих статьях и развитие мансийской социолингвистической и лингвотехнологической терминологии.

BERNADETT BÍRÓ, KATALIN SIPŐCZ (Szeged)

MANSI KEELEST MANSI KEELES

Artikli eesmärk on näidata, kust ja mida saab tõsiselt ohustatud mansi keele hetkeolukorra ja kasutamise kohta lugeda mansi keeles. Et mansi ajalehes Лўимă сѣрипос on tavaliselt sedalaadi teemasid vaadeldud, siis analüüsime oma uurimuses selle ajalehe 2015., 2016., 2019. ja 2023. aasta numbreid. Mansi keele sotsiolingvistilise olukorra tutvustamise järel esitame selliste ajaleheartiklite temaatilise analüüsi, kus on käsitletud keelelisi — ja eriti sotsiolingvistilisi — mansi keelt ennast puudutavaid küsimusi. Lõpuks näitame, et nendes kirjutistes võib täheldada ka mansikeelse sotsiolingvistilise ja keeletehnoloogilise terminoloogia arengut.