

Learning Foreign Languages and Hungarian with Akadémiai Kiadó's CD-ROM Dictionaries

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Abstract

The present paper investigates and illustrates the possible advantages of using the CD-ROM series published by Akadémiai Kiadó in language learning, which is extremely helpful for students of foreign languages. The focus is on the CD-ROM functions available for learners, which can be made use of either in the classroom for group learning or for individual use. This paper claims that it is worth using Akadémiai Kiadó's CD-ROM dictionaries in addition to the paper versions of the dictionaries.

1. Akadémiai Kiadó

Akadémiai Kiadó is Hungary's most important publisher of dictionaries. The company has produced a large number of bilingual and Hungarian monolingual dictionaries over the years. Currently, Akadémiai Kiadó is involved in the electronic publishing of dictionaries – including CD-ROMs and Intranet services.

Our dictionary database is in harmony with the international standards of XML databases. This makes it possible to create modern CD-ROMs from our language database. Our unique and up-to-date electronic dictionaries help learners of foreign languages and Hungarian study the chosen language in depth.

The easy-to-handle, comprehensive electronic dictionaries contain 60 000–200 000 words and expressions – often including specialist dictionaries – depending on dictionary type. Our special softwares make it possible for all our dictionaries published in our specific series – for instance, our English and German comprehensive dictionaries in the *Akadémiai MoBiMouse Plus* series, as well as our English, German, French bilingual, English technical and our Hungarian monolingual dictionaries in the series called *Academic Electronic Library* – to be used with the same software.

2. The Akadémiai MoBiMouse Plus series

One of our publications is the *Akadémiai MoBiMouse Plus* series (2000–2003) created and published together with *MorphoLogic*. Akadémiai MoBiMouse Plus contains the complete

material of the English and German databases included in the comprehensive dictionaries of Akadémiai Kiadó – extended with words and expressions used in computing. The CD-ROM can recognize and translate any words or even expressions displayed on the computer screen. Searching is easy with either the mouse or the keyboard, and the display can also be chosen: it can be used both as a pop-up as well as a window dictionary.

Altogether more than 400,000 words and expressions on each CD-ROM are provided for users to help them understand and read texts of any complexity. The database is also extended with a stock of some thousands words used in informatics. This enormous vocabulary extremely facilitates the understanding and translation of texts of various type, style and specialization. The size and the quality of the vocabulary enables users to find the translation equivalents for any words that they need during learning English or German, doing the homework, or reading books and articles, even when surfing the Internet.

MoBiMouse, the ‘translating mouse’, can show the meaning of the chosen Hungarian or English words on the screen without a mouse click. It is enough to point at a word with the arrow of the mouse and the program shows the meaning of the word in a window that opens immediately. When the arrow of the mouse is moved, the window immediately disappears, thus it does not disturb work. The program enables users to search for expressions as well. If the chosen word is part of an expression with other words beside the word the user pointed at, Akadémiai MoBiMouse gives the translation of the whole expression as well in the appearing window. Thus the program makes it extremely easy and quick to read, among other things, Internet texts. The pop-up version (see Figure 1) is therefore perfect for Internet users, while the more conventional window format (see Figure 2) is rather practical for ‘traditional’ users and language learners.

3. The Akadémiai Electronic Library series

Our other series, the *Akadémiai Electronic Library* (AEL) series is the result of our cooperation with *Avignonet*, which makes it possible for us to use up-to-date NextPage technology to produce CD-ROMs as well as intranet dictionaries. Most of our AEL CD-ROM dictionaries are packed together with the paper dictionaries, but some are individual publications. All the AEL dictionaries can be handled with the same software, using the same surface (see Figure 3). Each AEL dictionary contains the complete material of the paper dictionaries, including the *Foreword* and the *List of labels and abbreviations* (see Figure 4). The typography is the same in both the CD-ROM and the paper versions, but the CD-ROM data are less ambiguous: for instance, the contracted forms containing swung dashes are unpacked in the electronic version and appear as full words. The modern design and the user-friendly software provide a perfect tool for language learners and students since AEL is able to help learners to systematically study the chosen language, and to make use of all the options of AEL during practising the language.

In this series, the following dictionaries have been published so far: *English–Hungarian Concise Dictionary CD-ROM*, *Hungarian–English Concise Dictionary CD-ROM*, *German–Hungarian Concise Dictionary CD-ROM*, *Hungarian–German Concise Dictionary CD-ROM*, *English–Hungarian Technical Dictionary CD-ROM*. We have also published the *Concise Dictionary of the Hungarian Language* on an independently available CD-ROM, and we published all our comprehensive dictionaries, including English, German and French

in the spring of 2004 on CD-ROMs, which are packed and sold together with the paper versions of the dictionaries (see Figure 5). The concise dictionaries contain around 60,000 headwords, and more than 100,000 phrases, whereas the comprehensive dictionaries include around 120,000 headwords, and several hundred thousand phrases.

Running under Microsoft Windows 98 and all newer operational systems, our AEL dictionaries appear in a web browser window, with different kinds of content in different parts of the window. Multiple search functions are available for users (see Figure 6). In the case of simple search, the headword of entries, or words (even several words) within the entries can be looked up. The words found are listed in the List of found headwords window, and the chosen entry is shown in the Entry window.

Search pages can also be used to find entries. The search pages make it possible for users to search for words containing certain usage labels. The Label search page can help users to look up usage information in entries related to certain special fields, social layers, or geographical area. In this way, language learners can collect information on e.g., all the slang words or all the American English words listed in the dictionaries, which facilitates focused, thematic learning. It is also possible to run specific single dictionary searches in which one can narrow down the search on only one of the installed dictionaries. Otherwise, all the marked and activated dictionaries are searched as a rule. The program shows all the entries of all the chosen dictionaries beginning with the typed letters in alphabetical order. In addition, users can carry out complex searches, with the help of which the scope of the search question can be narrowed down.

The program can also search for entries that are similar in some way. This means that the program finds those entries that are rated as similar to a given entry and lists them in a hierarchical order. In this way, by searching for entries similar to *monkey*, one may find certain types of monkey listed in the dictionaries, such as *spider monkey*, *squirrel monkey*, *lion monkey* or *owl monkey*. Search questions can be saved for future use as well, and thus it is possible any time to get to the same list of found headwords within seconds. These search functions also facilitate focused, thematic language learning.

4. Summary

Generally speaking, it is recommended to use our CD-ROM dictionaries as supplementing our dictionaries. In this way, language learners on all levels can make good use of our electronic dictionaries during language learning. They provide useful assistance for both group learning and individual use. They are also helpful for translators and interpreters, especially as the time of our joining the European Union is approaching, since our dictionaries provide reliable data and search tools for language users.

References

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Figures

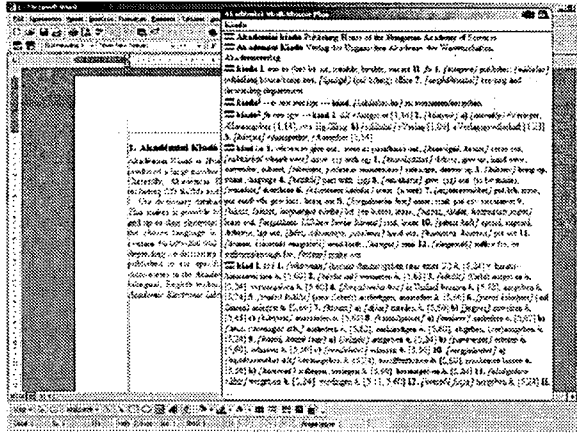


Figure 1: Akadémiai MoBiMouse Plus

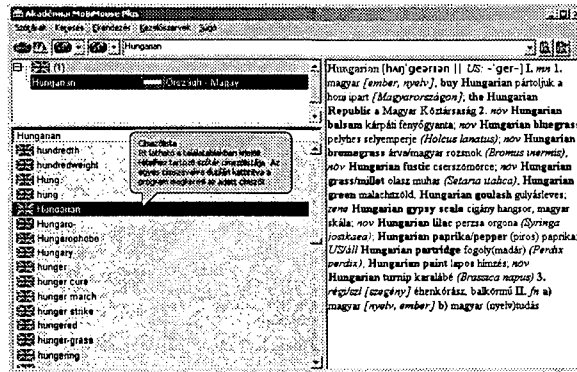


Figure 2: Akadémiai MoBiMouse Plus

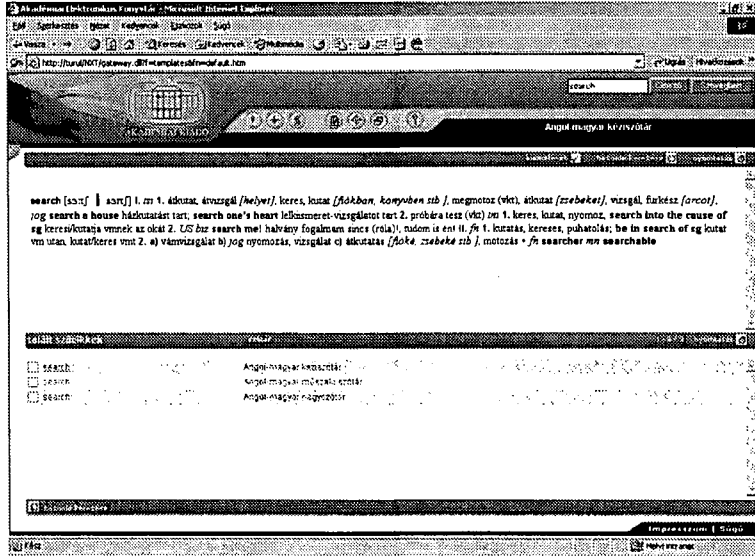


Figure 3: Akadémiai Electronic Library – Entries and windows

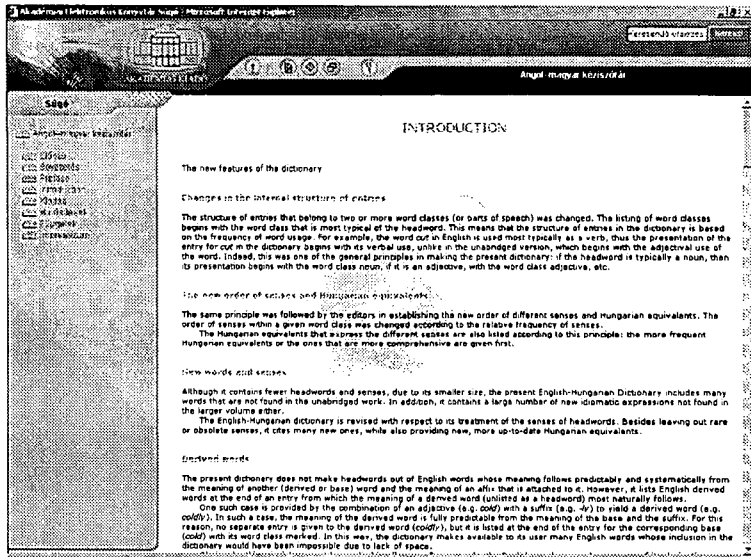


Figure 4: Akadémiai Electronic Library – Foreword

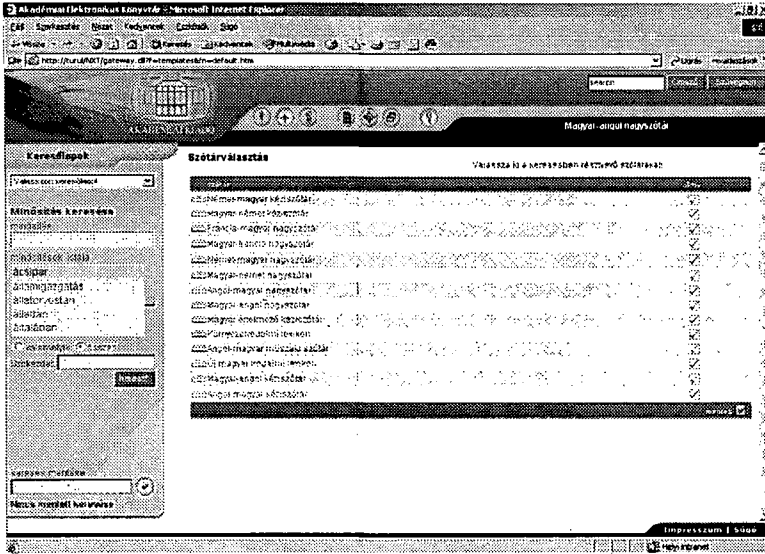


Figure 5: Akadémiai Electronic Library – Available dictionaries

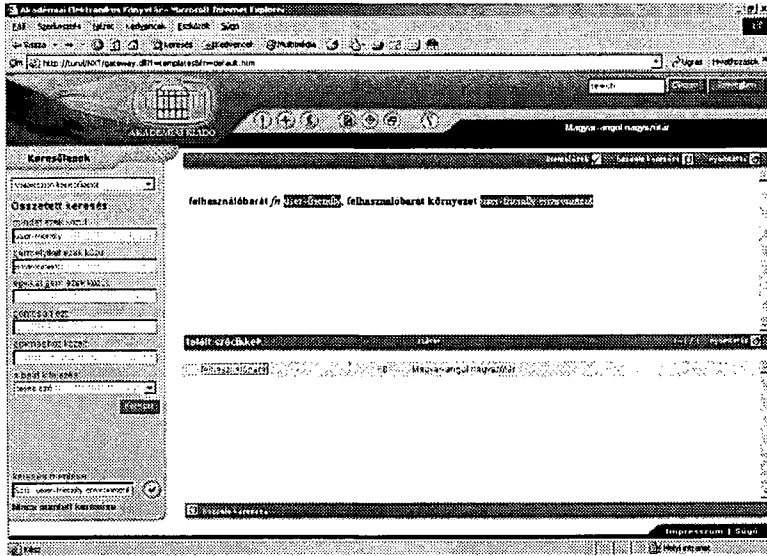


Figure 6: Akadémiai Electronic Library – Search functions