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The Role of Online Bible Readers in Biblical Concordance Making[1]

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ABSTRACT

Bible concordances lead Bible readers with rendering words and phrases of the Holy Bible in alphabetical listings and show where the terms occur throughout all books of Scripture. With cross-references for verses, concordances make it easy to understand the meaning of terms and the context in which those words are used. In Hungarian Bible studies several translations of the Bible are available (also online) and some of the contemporary translations are provided with on-the-fly concordances. Online versions of the Bible translations can easily build KWIC-concordances but not in an equal way. The study shows different approaches to online Bible concordance of the Hungarian translations to be found online and also tries to illustrate bottle-necks of concordance making on the off-line concordance being built to the so called ÚRK Bible (Újonnan Revideált Biblia – Newly Revised Bible). The obstacles in this concordance are connected with terminological and lexicographic approaches as this concordance is based on translations of the keywords of the ESV Bible Concordance.

Keywords: Bible translations, Bible concordances, terminology, online Bible readers

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1. Introduction

In our study, we present the search functions of an online Bible which can be opened and read in a web browser and its importance for concordance making. Our study contributes to broader research on Bible translation and concordance making. In our present work, only the linguistically relevant details of concordance making are presented, as well as the functionalities of websites containing Hungarian Bible translations for concordance preparation. The analysis and the interpretation of Bible translations placed in the online space can help several fields of translation studies, including the review and further reflection of specific translational and terminological problems.

For more than half a century, translation studies have paid special attention to the theory and practice of Bible translation. The rise of computer technology has opened new possibilities, making it easier to research texts in the digital space. It has also made it easier to navigate and search the Bible. For example, through Bible readers – programs offering Bible texts on IT tools.

2. Hungarian Bible translations

The Bible has many layers: it can be spiritual-historical, translational-linguistic, or above all religious-theological – a cultural transmission through language, where the target language text is produced as a translation interpreted through the translators' hermeneutic interpretation or through the principles of translation studies they apply. As the linguistic or interpretative problems affecting the translator are quite diverse (see Naudé 2010, Lanstyák & Heltai 2012, Lanstyák 2013, Pecsuk 2020, 22–44, Fabiny 2021), the equivalence of the translated text can be achieved at different levels. It is no coincidence that a good translator must have the empathy of a psychologist in addition to the knowledge of a linguist-theologian (cf. Pecsuk, 2020, 13). As Naudé states, a translator without knowledge of translation studies is "similar to a ghost without a sheet or a corncob without kernels – useless or at least not very effective" (Naudé 2021, 10).

The "fluidity" of communication with regard to the text of the Bible is not easy: mostly because of the distance in time, space and language from the original texts, and the resulting distance in interpretation. Interpretation for translators and readers alike can be affected by language-related problems (see also Lanstyák 2013; M. Pintér 2020). Perhaps the most obvious, but also the most complex reason for the linguistic and interpretative problems is the distance in time and space of the text's creation, which has an impact on other cultural, linguistic and hermeneutic interpretations. Thus, for example, the term "circumcision", which means not only a physical act, but also, through it, a relationship between people being chosen, even a relationship with God:

„And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live." (Deut 30,6)[2]. The same physical and temporal distance characterises some of the geographical names and units of measurement in the Bible, which can feel a little distant to European culture.

The distance between the text and its readers can of course be reduced by "updating" the language of the target text, with the appearance of new translations, which can contribute to an easier understanding of certain passages, not only through the contemporary language use, but also through new interpretations of the re-translation (in this regard see Nord 2016). The last 20–25 years have seen several Hungarian translations, re-translations, and revisions, the most important of which are the following:

- Neovulgate 1997 (KNV)
- Bible of the St. Stephen Association 2005 (SZIT)
- Newly Revised Károli Bible 2011 (ÚRK/NRT)
- Károli version by Patmos Publishing House 2012 (PK)
- Easy-to-read Version 2012 (EFO)
- Revised Hungarian Bible 2014 (RÚF)
- Revised Károli Translation (Károli 21)

From a translation studies aspect, it is interesting to ask whether the differences between sacred and vernacular language use were more significant in the present or in the past. Although the language of Hungarian Bible translations today is closer to the spoken (secular) varieties of Hungarian, the use of sacred language is mostly marked by the use of specific terminology. At the same time, its specialised linguistic character is reinforced by the style (and even the diversity and richness of styles) and the thematic-cultural binding, on the one hand, and by the theoretical issues and problems related to the creation and translation of texts, on the other. Gergely Hanula sees the difference between sacral language and vernacular language in the permanence (the subject and object of the Bible are the same in all translations) and limitation (lexical, syntactic and semantic constraints in the respective languages) of the sacred language, in the obscurity of the meanings it covers (whether in terms of wording or content, the inconceivability of the representation) and in its renunciation of individual intention (the individual is eliminated by the community) – together creating a sense of strangeness or inspiration (Hanula 2016, 102). Hanula's idea is that it is not the process of translation that makes the text and the language sacred, but rather the use that makes it so: the more uniform the target language versions, the stronger the authority of the language, its "sacred" character. This is clearly evident in the 1908 edition of the Károli Bible, the text of which still determines more recent translations and is still in use today.

2 ESV Bible.

3. A possible analytical framework for online readers

Reading and analysis of translations are greatly facilitated by digital bibles and digital reference works, which can be used to help interpretation by including multiple electronic texts or to allow parallel Bible reading. Luke's Gospel asks the question, "How do you read it?" (Luke 10,26). The question can be interpreted and answered with exegetical precision (e.g., Fabiny 2021) and in lay "reading". In layman's terms, the question can refer to the design of the way of reading, which means the way of reading biblical texts, the technical layout of texts and the design of possible interoperability between them. At the same time, the answer is also related to the technical parameters of the research on biblical translations: how web technology can help in interpreting and comparing translations, and in designing and implementing new translations.

Websites containing Hungarian Bible translations can be categorised according to several parameters (for more information see M. Pintér 2021), the presence or absence of certain characteristics does not necessarily mean a qualitative difference. Online content, on the other hand, can be categorised according to objective criteria relevant to its use, showing the various parameters necessary for reading and research. Digital assets for reading and research can be analysed according to the following characteristics:

- the length of the text on the interface (block layout, possibly with a verse or longer pericope to aid reading),
- the number of translations that can be displayed on the interface, i.e., whether it is possible to read parallel texts,
- the number of Bible translations available on the site,
- the presence or absence of search functionality built into the site[3] (whether it is possible to search, and if so, what type – word-based or regular expression),
- specific content: what specific extra applications are included to help research and read Bible translations.

Another area of use for digital Bibles is language technology and digital humanities (a good example is language analysis, for example using SketchEngine), which focuses on the use of longer texts. A longer text in this case means a text of hundreds of thousands of words, which for some Hungarian canonical Bible translations means more than half a million words. The translations of the Bible are an important field for computer-assisted text processing, including corpus linguistics, because they are a large amount of annotatable text that can be stored and analysed on a computer, with an accurate bibliography, available in several

3 It should be noted that the browser's search function (Ctrl+F or Cmd+F) cannot be used in this case, as pages are displayed one section at a time and the browser's built-in search engine can only search in the text that has been preloaded by the browser and displayed in the user interface. The real purpose of search engines is to search hidden texts (including the whole Bible) and list results in an organised way.

languages and language versions so that even the translated versions can be paralleled.

The online comparison of the text of Scripture is not only a useful opportunity for translation studies – but it is also a useful and important opportunity for humanities and religious studies. The interoperability between Bibles in the same language is a useful help for researchers or even for those interested (the diversity of research and readings would justify that the search engine built into the query interface should have as detailed search functions as possible – more about these and the corpus linguistic basis of Hungarian Bible translations in M. Pintér & P. Márkus 2021).

Perhaps the most important element of online readers is the parameterisation of the query and the vertical listing appearing after the query, the so called concordance list. In case of online Bible translations, the word "concordance" has a double meaning: on the one hand, it refers to an alphabetical collection of words and places where they occur in Scripture, helping to locate and contextualise a topic or phrase. Research in lexicology and translation studies is in fact again based on concordances, since relevant decisions based on linguistic knowledge can be made on the basis of the hit and the context. In other words, concordances are returning to help translators and exegetes in a computerised form, in keeping with the postmodern, contemporary age.

Digital visualisation and searching in digital text are a useful aid to concordance – query interfaces are now capable of producing concordances in real time. Using the search functions of online Bibles, it is possible to do keyword searches, i.e., to put words of Scripture into context. The online sites that display Hungarian translations usually have a search function, some of them with multiple parameters (switching between lower- and upper-case letters, searching for the beginning or end of a word). To highlight just a few good examples, the following sites allow real-time online concordance creation:

- A Biblia mindenkié ('Bible is for everyone') (https://www.abibliamindenkie.hu/keres/uj/): the search allows to search case-sensitive or phrases and expressions; the result returns the verse or locus, pointing to the book and verse as a hyperlink.
- Szentírás.hu ('Scripture') (https://szentiras.hu/kereses/search): in the search, it is possible to select and narrow down between books and/or translations, and to display results by verse, chapter, book, Old Testament and New Testament; the search results display the verse per translation and the locus, pointing to the book and verse as a hyperlink.
- On-line Biblia ('On-line Bible') (biblia.hit.hu): the search can be fine-tuned according to a number of parameters, including the possibility to select and narrow the search by book and/or translation, or to set word match only the beginning of a word and to toggle diacritical marks off and on; the search results are shown in table format with the locus. The locus here also acts as a hyperlink,

marking the verse containing the search term in the text of the displayed section. Another important feature is the possibility of substituting one or more characters in the search string and using the AND, OR and NOT operators.

- biblia.hu (biblia.biblia.hu): the website contains the revision of Károli's translation published in 1908, in which words, phrases and expressions can be searched for, either by book or by searching the Old and New Testaments separately. The search engine allows to toggle diacritical marks and upper- and lower-case letters on and off, and to use the AND and '-' (minus) operators to narrow down the search.
- Okos Biblia ('The Vise Bible') (https://biblia.szeroczei.hu): the search engine allows to search for words and word structures in different translations of the Bible, narrowed down to books or larger units, or to search for multiword units. Unlike above, it is also possible to search according to numbers of the Strong's concordance. The result will return the verse per translation, or mark the locus, pointing to the book and verse as a hyperlink. Clicking on the locus returns the chapter, with the verse containing the match highlighted in colour.
- http://www.polarhome.com/biblia/: The page contains the 1908's revised edition of the Károli translation as plain HTML text, which does not handle the diacritical characters of the Hungarian alphabet. The search looks for the characters entered in the search field in a single line of a verse, or, as a narrowed search, it is possible to substitute one or more characters. It is important to note that the search engine is not case sensitive and that it is the oldest of all the listed sites.

4. Concordances

A useful feature of online readers is the automatic (but somewhat inaccurate or incorrect) concordance generation. The Hungarian linguistic literature on Bible translation is less concerned with concordances and is mainly structured around two distinct themes: the literature on Bible translation in general, and the literature analysing Hungarian translations. It is important, however, that the linguistic approach cannot be "bypassed" in literary and hermeneutical approaches (e.g., the writings of Northrop Frye).

In addition to translation studies, it is also worth mentioning a less researched area, namely biblical concordances, and their production. The benefits of concordance are manifold: it helps the translator to understand the context, to clarify meanings, to understand syntactical information, but it also helps the lay reader to find a word or a word combination, to understand the verses. Concordances can also be seen as a means of increasing intellectual knowledge about the Bible. They

give the context and exact biblical location of a word. More recent, mainly online, concordances have been supplemented with Greek and Latin dictionaries, as well as various other dictionaries to aid interpretation and hence translation (a good example is the Blue Letter Bible in English, which interactively integrates various dictionaries and interpretive materials).

In today's computerised world, concordancing no longer seems like a complicated and lengthy process, as most of the Bible readers mentioned above, for example, have search engines that can display concordance results. However, computer developments cannot replace human beings in this respect – but they can be a useful complement to the research of the Bible.

Although it is not obvious, since concordances are produced for monolingual Bibles, the production of a concordance can be useful in the field of translation studies and terminology. Terminology affects religious language use in many ways (one only has to think of the theolinguistic aspects, and the boundedness of liturgical language use), from the point of view of translation theory it plays an important role in distinguishing translations between religious denominations (a typical example in Hungarian is the difference between translations of 'neighbor' e.g. in Mark 12,31 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself', where the older Catholic translations use *embertárs* whereas other translations use *felebarát* or the spelling of proper nouns, e.g. Bathsheba who is translated as *Betsabé, Batseba, Betshabé* being connected to several religions; or the usage of small-caps in *Úr* – the translation of Lord), or even in the choice of the appropriate equivalents and their form in the course of concordance preparation. If we bear in mind that the linguistic role of the words and expressions used in the Bible is specific not only in their meaning but also in their range of usage, it becomes clear that the biblical lexicon is highly terminological. A concordance, i.e., a list of words and their places of occurrence in the Bible, reinforces the domain orientation of the Biblical terminology, let it be a lexical item typically found in the Old or the New Testament, or lexical items typical of a certain translation.

In this chapter, we present some terminological solutions to the concordance of the Newly Revised Translation (NRT) published by Veritas Publishers in 2021.

The NRT concordance is based on the literal translation of the English Standard Version (ESV Bible[4]) (online version: https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/concordance/), which contains 3077 headwords, but does not contain all the references to all the verses, but only the most important ones as considered by the editors.

As the Hungarian concordance is based on the Hungarian translation of the English list of headwords, the first step of the Hungarian concordance is to translate the English headwords (some of them have

4 See more on ESV Bible: https://www.esv.org/preface/ or https://www.challies.com/book-reviews/the-esv-study-bible-a-review.

clear denotative equivalence, but there are also headwords with more complex meaning fields, for example, 'ability', which in the Hungarian translation can be 'ability' or *képesség*, 'talent' or *tehetség*, 'wisdom' or *bölcsesség* but also 'intelligence' or *értelem*).

For illustrative purposes, below are a few examples of how headwords are established, and concordances are made. There are two important aspects of concordances: meaning and word form. The meaning is important because the search engine wants to find the place of the verse based on the word form that matches the meaning. In this respect, homonyms may cause problems, as their confusion would confuse the interpretation. For example, it makes a difference whether the lexeme *hisz* 'believe' is used as a conjunction, adverb, or verb, or whether *szeretett* 'loved' is used as a past participle, or as a past tense verb. Some of the aforementioned items (forms ending in *-tt*) are easier to handle, partly because there are few of each form that can be manually selected, and partly because they are local (if *szeret* 'like' is a verb, there is an infinitive ending in *-ni* in the verse). Semantically more complex lexemes are more difficult to handle, which have to be reviewed manually, and the verses have to be reordered under a different headword. Such is the case of the adverb *felett* 'above', which can mean physically 'vertically above someone, higher than someone', but in the Bible, the transcendent meaning 'above some level, above some degree, above something' is much more common. In the same way, *nyomorult* 'wretched' can be used in the sense of 'suffering severe hardship, unfortunate', but also 'living in misery, poor conditions'. The identification of homonymous word forms is simple, as the two meanings of the same string can be resolved by the surrounding word forms, affixes, etc., but in the case of variant roots, there can be significantly different word forms. The system of variant roots in the Hungarian language is relatively well-regulated, with each type covering the forms occurring in the text of the Bible, but the archaizing language of the Bible (cf. Győri 2014) and the significant modifications of the strings (e.g., in the case of plural verbs with *v*-s variant root forms) raise several questions. Although the Hungarian word forms (*alma ~ almá** 'apple', *madár ~ madar** 'bird', *elalszik ~ elaludt* 'sleep', *eszik ~ ettem ~ ettek* 'eat', *zászló ~ zászla** 'flag', *hisz ~ higgy** 'believe') can be found without prior grammatical analysis, in the case of concordances the representation of identical word forms in a headword can be problematic. In the Hungarian tradition, concordances are based on the root, i.e., the different word forms are placed one below the other.

The structure of each entry, the linking of the headword and the related verses containing other word forms, and the presentation in the same group are by no means unproblematic (even if it is based on tradition in some respects). When compiling the concordance for the Hungarian translation, we are confronted with the following types of grammar concerning the word forms, which need to be dealt with when making the concordance:

1. different morphological types of root alternations: multiform word roots (e.g., noun, verb), some of which are locally manageable because there are few main variants besides the dictionary root (*hisz – higgy* /nominative and imperative of the word 'believe'/, *eszik – evő* /forms of the verb 'eat'/, *medve – medvék* /singular and plural of the word 'bear'/, *között – közé – köztem* /forms of the word 'between'/); the same root, which behaves irregularly (*szép – szebb* 'nice – nicer' or *jó – jobb* 'good – better'); the treatment of suppletive forms (*egy – első* 'one – first', *kettő – második* 'two – second', *van – lesz* 'is – will', *sok – több* 'much – more') is mostly a linguistic problem since in concordance suppletive forms will be separate entries,
2. the same root with multiple suffixes: for example, *fényes* 'shiny' and *fényesebb* 'shinier' will be two independent headwords but word forms with inflections will be listed under the headwords.
3. lexemes with the same form, but belonging to different parts of speech (a type of homonymy): homonymy is treated similarly to dictionaries, in that an entry contains concordances related to only one part of speech (i.e., the adjectival forms of *puszta* 'mere' are separate from the nominal forms),
4. prefixes: due to the English translation, this group includes *leg-* 'most' and verbal prefixes, but like the suppletive forms, they are not a major problem as they form separate entries (e.g., *alszik* 'sleep' and '*elalszik*' 'fall asleep' are two separate independent entries),
5. verb tenses: since there is primarily a formal difference between headwords, Hungarian verb tenses are treated separately, but are not a major problem; with regard to verb tenses, words ending in *-t/-tt* '-ed' can be problematic, since they can also be verbs, and participle forms – they are listed in a separate entries,
6. compounds: independent lexemes can also be members of compound words, in which case they are treated as separate headwords (i.e., *balzsam* 'balm', *balzsamolaj* 'balm oil', and *olaj* 'oil' become separate entries),
7. separable verbal prefixes: although separable verbal prefixes are formally more difficult to handle (since they are not part of the orthographic word), the search algorithm takes this into account, so that the postposed verb phrases appear together with the prefixed verbal prefixes (e.g., *fölmegy* 'go up' and *megy föl* 'go up' will be found in the same entry under *fölmegy*; *felmegy* 'go up' and *megy fel* 'go up' will be listed under *felmegy*).

The types defined above, as well as some of the examples, typically require a 'human', not a 'machine' to solve, and therefore cannot be satisfactorily handled by the search engine of a Bible reader on the Internet. Online Bible readers only perform character matching, so they are not able to analyse roots automatically or even recognise and distinguish word groups.

The concordance of the NRT follows the headwords of the English ESV Concordance, i.e. the relationship between the English source language lexeme and the target language Hungarian equivalent is based on the relationship between the two Bible translations, and the Hungarian headwords are given on the basis of the Hungarian translation of the NRT. Thus, the meaning of the Hungarian equivalent is not always identical to the source English, since concordance does not primarily require the Hungarian equivalent of the English lexeme, but the lexeme used in the Hungarian translation of the word in the English verse, which is usually equivalent in meaning, but there are also semantically distant words among the target language equivalents (language used in Bible translations is close to a language for special purposes signalising the sacred usage – this provides a basis for the so called theolinguistic researches). Thus, for example, the equivalents of 'ancient' in the concordance are *örökkévaló* 'everlasting', *öregkorú* 'old aged', *régi* 'old', since the ESV Bible word 'ancient' is used in Hungarian with the three equivalents above; the Hungarian equivalents of 'church' include 'church' (*egyház*), 'congregation' (*gyülekezet*), but also 'temple' (*templom*). The headwords of the Hungarian Concordance reflect those of the English ESV Concordance. The English headwords were extracted from the pdf-file of the ESV Bible Concordance chapter (ESV, 2008: 2665–2742) using optical character recognition and pattern matching. The English source file contains the English verses and the locus to give and check their Hungarian equivalents. The headwords in the English list of headwords are used as the basis for the Hungarian equivalents. The Hungarian Bible translation is based on the translation by Veritas Publishing House. After parallelizing the English and Hungarian headwords, the Hungarian verses were extracted from the Hungarian translation by pattern matching. In the file containing the command lines that automatically compile the Hungarian concordance, it can be later modified and changed after checking and fine-tuning.

The semi-automated concordance making is useful but some concordances in Hungarian have to be checked over "by eye": because of the semantic and grammatical homonymy. Concordance cannot be done fully automated, as finding the exact equivalents cannot be done without semantic clarification. During the concordance process, the following situations occurred which made automation difficult:

a) The automation cannot handle upper- and lower-case letters satisfactorily: case sensitivity and punctuation, and the automated search for words, which are also used as common words and proper nouns, homonyms are more difficult. Afterwards, words and verses with the correct meaning should be manually sorted into separate groups.

b) The handling of word boundaries is not always satisfactory: if we look only at a string (e.g., *épít* 'build'), or if we embed the string in a longer unit, we may encounter problems of interpretation that we cannot foresee when writing the scripts – but we can foresee that when checking manually. Besides the character sequence *épít* 'build' *építő*

'builder', *építőmester* 'master builder', *templomépítésre* 'to build a church', *szépítésük* 'beautify', *újjáépítik* 'rebuild' will also be found. Some of these can be handled by defining the word boundaries precisely (however, the definition of the final element can be problematic because of the suffixes). When defining *sereg* 'band', the word *hadsereg* 'army' should be excluded, as it is a separate headword. Similarly, there is a problem with separable verbal prefixes, which can be found with a special script.

c) There is also a special way of dealing with expressions such as *börtönbe vet* 'imprison', *életben marad* 'stay alive', which behave like separable verbal prefixes – there can be chunks of orthographic words between the two items of the dictionary form.

d) Automation can only partially (e.g., small and capital initials) or not at all handle differences in meaning (homonyms). Without automatic morphological analysis, the forms belonging to different word classes (e.g., *haragos* 'angry', *szegény* 'poor', *hát* 'back') can only be distinguished manually.

5. Conclusions

The experience and research area provided by online Bible readers are becoming increasingly important for researchers. Bible reading and various linguistic research (whether theolinguistic-terminological or translation studies) can be aided by concordances. In addition to the paper version of these, concordance makers built into the search interface of online readers are becoming increasingly fashionable, but the morphological richness of the Hungarian language and the biblical meanings make them currently less useful compared to the semi-automatic and handmade concordances. The analysis above shows that the online versions of the Hungarian Bible translations are not uniform in their handling of concordances, but it also shows that there is currently no good solution for dealing with them in a satisfactory way (the improved version of the Unified Bible Reader – Egyesített Bibliaolvasó, ebo.kre.hu – will try to provide a solution).

The making of a biblical concordance is a complex linguistic and exegetical task: the concordance tested on the translation of the NRT (currently under construction) served as a basis to demonstrate that manual and semi-automatic solutions can be successful – the proper implementation of the experience could even help in the development of a search engine written for Hungarian.

At the same time, concordances can be useful in the context of theolinguistic-terminological research, since not only the semantic fields of a word or an expression can be clarified, not only the characteristics of the language use of a particular denomination can be explored in more depth, but also the translation theory and translation technique of individual translations can be examined.

Terminological clarification and quality assurance procedures are also useful for lexical problems encountered in the preparation of concordances. The two types of solutions for concordance production – manual and computer-based – provide useful experience for all parties: the linguist, the linguistic technologist and the theologian.

High-quality concordances, which can be produced quickly, can help to make linguistic and hermeneutic research more complex.

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