

26 September 2006

By: Ionut Ilascu, Editor, Software Reviews



## Smart Talking

### *Are you aware of whom you are addressing?*

Do you know the difference between a dictionary and a thesaurus? I'm sure you do, but I will explain it anyway for my younger readers. A dictionary is a collection of words and their definitions. In a dictionary the words are explained so that the user understands the meaning. A thesaurus, on the other hand, is a collection of words with similar, related or opposite meaning. This new meaning of the thesaurus dates back from Roget's Thesaurus (Peter Mark Roget) in 1805. It was released to the public in 1852 and the original edition contained 15.000 words. Since then, the thesaurus became larger and larger with each edition. Mobysaurus Thesaurus is one of the many digital versions of the genuine thing. The developer is DonationCoder and the version of the program is 1.0.27. The software is not a hoax as it is based on Moby Thesaurus II (30,000 root words and 2.5 million words), which is part of the Moby Project (an attempt to create public domain lexical resources). The interface of the software is extremely simple, especially designed to emphasize the utility of the software and not its looks. For this application, I think there could not be a more suitable interface and I think it would have been tiresome to have it clogged with fallals. There are three menus in the menu bar: File, Tools and Help. The Lookup bar comes right under the menu and the Search button at the end of it. Next to the Search button there is a slide bar that has the property of enlarging or reducing the size of the font of the results. So it is actually a zoom tool that allows you to make the characters larger or smaller, not to lose time looking for your glasses. The toolbar is made of four options: Find Synonyms, Find Related/Synonymous Roots, Find Online and History and Favorites. Let's dive into each of the options of the application. In the File menu, there is a very interesting and useful option, the Save one. This little tool will allow the user to save the results of a certain search into a text document either as RTF (Rich Text Format) or the ancestral TXT format. This way you no longer need to use the copy/paste function, although this one works just fine too. The printing option is also available, so you can put on paper the results of your search. This option extends up to the Find Online feature of the software (in this case the file will be saved as .htm, .html, .mht and .txt). The Tools menu supplies you with options like Add to Favorites, copy functions (all or just the selected), Clear Search History (erases your search traces), Double-Click actions (select actions like select, copy to clipboard or do nothing) and Customize (font related settings: type, style and size). The Find Synonyms window is split in two: one for the found entries related to your search and one giving you the synonyms of the entries. The same arrangement is in the Find Related/Synonymous Roots window. The difference here is that on the right side there is the root-word and the related synonyms. Clicking on any of the synonyms under the root-word will transform them into root-words also. Double clicking it will create a tree of related words. On the left side of the window, the program will display the synonyms of the root-words selected on the right. The Find Online feature provides the user a direct link to Wikipedia website. If Wikipedia has an entry of that word in the database it will display all the information about it. In the History and Favorites window - as you probably figured out by yourselves - is where all your searches are recorded. That's about all there is to say about the software. Oh, I almost forgot to tell you that you can contribute to improving the database. All you have to do is go into the Help menu and choose Contribute to Thesaurus Database option. Your default web browser will open a web page with the Moby Thesaurus index. **The Good** The software is just great whenever you are having difficulties in finding the right synonym. The application is super-easy to use and the results are accurate. All you need is the intelligence to discern between formal and informal speech. **The Bad** I think that this database contributing thing is

quite a risk. Anyone can enter whatever s/he wants. And all those that want to keep the thesaurus clean and healthy will have a whole lot of work to do in order to make the application reliable. ***The Truth*** like this sort of projects and my only worry is not to become corrupted by malicious entries. *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*