

Student Perceptions and Usage of VERBDICT in Arabic Language Learning: A Preliminary Study at UiTM Kelantan

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.1026EDU0118>

Received: 27 January 2026; Accepted: 13 February 2026; Published: 10 March 2026

ABSTRACT

The use of online dictionaries is now becoming a very important tool in the process of learning languages, especially Arabic. It is widely applied in various learning activities due to its significant influence on learning outcomes. Although online dictionaries are easily available on the internet, Malay-Arabic dictionaries that focus on Arabic words with their definitions, such as VerbDict (<http://www.verbdict.abqarie.com/>), are still not given much attention. Studies related to its use and students' perception of its usefulness have not yet been identified. Therefore, this study was conducted to see the use of UiTM Kelantan Branch students of the Arabic verb dictionary (VerbDict) and their perception of its usefulness in learning Arabic. This study used a quantitative approach, and the data were obtained using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. A total of 136 students were selected through purposive sampling from three faculties of study at UiTM Kelantan Branch to answer the online questionnaire. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 23.0 software. The findings of the study prove that i) the level of use of the verb dictionary is high (M=4.06-4.20; SP:0.78-0.92) and ii) their perception of the usefulness of the dictionary was also high (M=4.35-4.45; SP:0.64-0.69). This dictionary is proposed to be widely used for the benefit of students.

Keywords: Dictionary of verbs, level of usage, perception, UiTM students, Arabic.

INTRODUCTION

The Arabic language has the richest history, culture, and literary works. As a result, interest in learning this language is growing around the world. With the advent of the internet, information is becoming easier to obtain in today's sophisticated digital era. Online dictionaries are a very useful tool for learning Arabic. Users can search for Arabic words or phrases by using an online dictionary. Aside from providing information related to word definitions, online dictionaries offer examples of words, synonyms, antonyms, and other information that help users understand words better.

Online dictionaries have become one of the invaluable tools in learning and communication in this digital age. Various aspects of life, including education, language, and culture, have undergone a positive transformation; thanks to the existence of online dictionaries. Technology has been used in almost all areas of language education that improve the quality of input, make communication authentic, and provide timely and relevant feedback. Additionally, it supports the development of all language skills (e.g., listening, writing, reading, speaking, grammar, and vocabulary) and creates a pleasant learning environment for students' language learning (Afsaneh Ghanizadeh et al., 2015).

The use of online dictionaries is preferred over printed dictionaries due to their speed and usability. By simply typing a word, definitions can be accessed more quickly by looking through the pages on the paper (Truong, 2012). Online dictionaries do not require users to refer to basic words that require mastery of neuroscience. By

simply typing the first letter of the word they are looking for, they are able to get the meaning of the word in no time. The use of online dictionaries and software is easier, more effective, and more efficient without having to master neuroscience first (Besse Wahida, 2017). In addition, digital dictionaries have a diverse appearance with more organized word entry management and are easy to update and modify as needed (Muhammad Yamin et al., 2022).

There are many Arabic online dictionaries that can be used as a reference for students. Among the well-known ones are Al-Maany, Forvo, WordReference, Livingsoft, Lexilogos Arabic Dictionary, and Bab. La Arabic Dictionary, Cambridge English-Arabic Dictionary, Glosbe Dictionary Malay-Arabic, The Arabic Lexicon, Reverso, and others. However, students still face the problem of grammatical categories, which are complex to understand due to the variety of elements such as gender, number, tenses, and so on (Naimah Abdullah, 2005). Dictionaries that give special attention to these elements are still underappreciated. Therefore, the online dictionary (VerbDict) was developed to overcome the gaps found in previous online dictionaries as well as the need for learning Arabic among students who learn Arabic as a third language at MARA Technology University. This dictionary focuses on the translation process of all three types of Arabic verbs, namely past tense (الفعل الماضي), present verb (الفعل المضارع), and command verb (فعل الأمر), considering elements of pronoun, gender, and number.

The above studies show the use of several online dictionaries among language learners. However, no studies have been conducted to look at the use of online dictionaries and students' assessment of the usefulness of these dictionaries. To fill this research gap in this study, this study aimed to examine (a) UiTM Kelantan Branch students' evaluation on the use of the VerbDict dictionary and (b) their perception of the usefulness of this Arabic verb dictionary.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study uses the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) introduced by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in 1973. This theory offers a solid framework to explain students' active selection of VerbDict online dictionaries. Based on the UGT theory, goal-oriented users will actively choose certain media to meet their different psychological and social needs. It focuses more on "what someone does with the media" rather than "what the media does to someone." In this study, the UGT theory shows that UiTM students actively use the Verbdict dictionary for specific academic purposes, like checking difficult verb forms or making sure their grammar is correct during practice and games, instead of just using it without thinking. This high level of use is a manifestation of the conscious use of strategies to ensure academic success and not just random browsing (Ruggiero, 2000).

Online Dictionary

The word "dictionary" is derived from the Arabic قاموس qāmūs, which means ocean or large ocean (Ibrahim Mustafa et al., 2023). Furthermore, Mu'jam al-Rāid defines the dictionary as the great sea or the farthest place in the depths of the sea (Al-Maany, 2023). Thus, a dictionary is defined as a reference of vocabulary in a language arranged alphabetically, with information about each word (Al-Maany, 2023). According to Crystal (2011), a dictionary is a lexical reference that contains a list of words in a language and their definitions. Typically, dictionaries also include pronunciation information, etymology, usage examples, synonyms, antonyms, and other additional information. On the other hand, Ibn Manzur (2010), a well-known Arabic scholar, who published "Lisan al-Arab," ~~that~~ does not clearly define "dictionary." Instead, he tried to provide definitions and synonyms of thousands of words in Arabic. Although there is no direct definition, "Oral al-Arab" remains the primary reference for understanding the word in the context of Classical Arabic. Finally, this work is considered valuable in Arabic lexicography and is an important resource for Arabic scholars.

The learning process by using various language dictionaries can help students master vocabulary well. Students need to take notes and memorize the words they find. However, they will not be able to find out the meaning of

new words they come across except by referring a dictionary. The teacher plays a role in guiding students to use the dictionary and translate the meaning according to the requirements of the sentence. Dictionaries should be diversified. It is –just not enough for a dictionary to contain a variety of knowledge about the meaning of words. Students can use the Arabic-Malay dictionary as the main basis or the Arabic-English dictionary and the Arabic-Arabic dictionary. To master Arabic well, each student needs to have his or her own dictionary. Without a dictionary, students will face difficulties in mastering Arabic.

Therefore, an online dictionary called Verb Dictionary (VerbDict) was developed to meet this need. This online dictionary contains all 34 tasrif (for fiil madhi and mudharie') and 6 tasrif (for fiil amar) for each word. It also contains about 120 entries, or verbs, taken from the Arabic syllabus taught at UiTM involving the codes TAC101, TAC151, TAC401, TAC451, and TAC501. This is to help students find the appropriate words according to the elements of gender, number, and tense to be used in sentences to form dialogues for the purpose of simulation tests and role-plays. The VerbDict verb dictionary can be accessed from the <http://www.verbdict.abqarie.com/> URL, as in Figure 1 below.

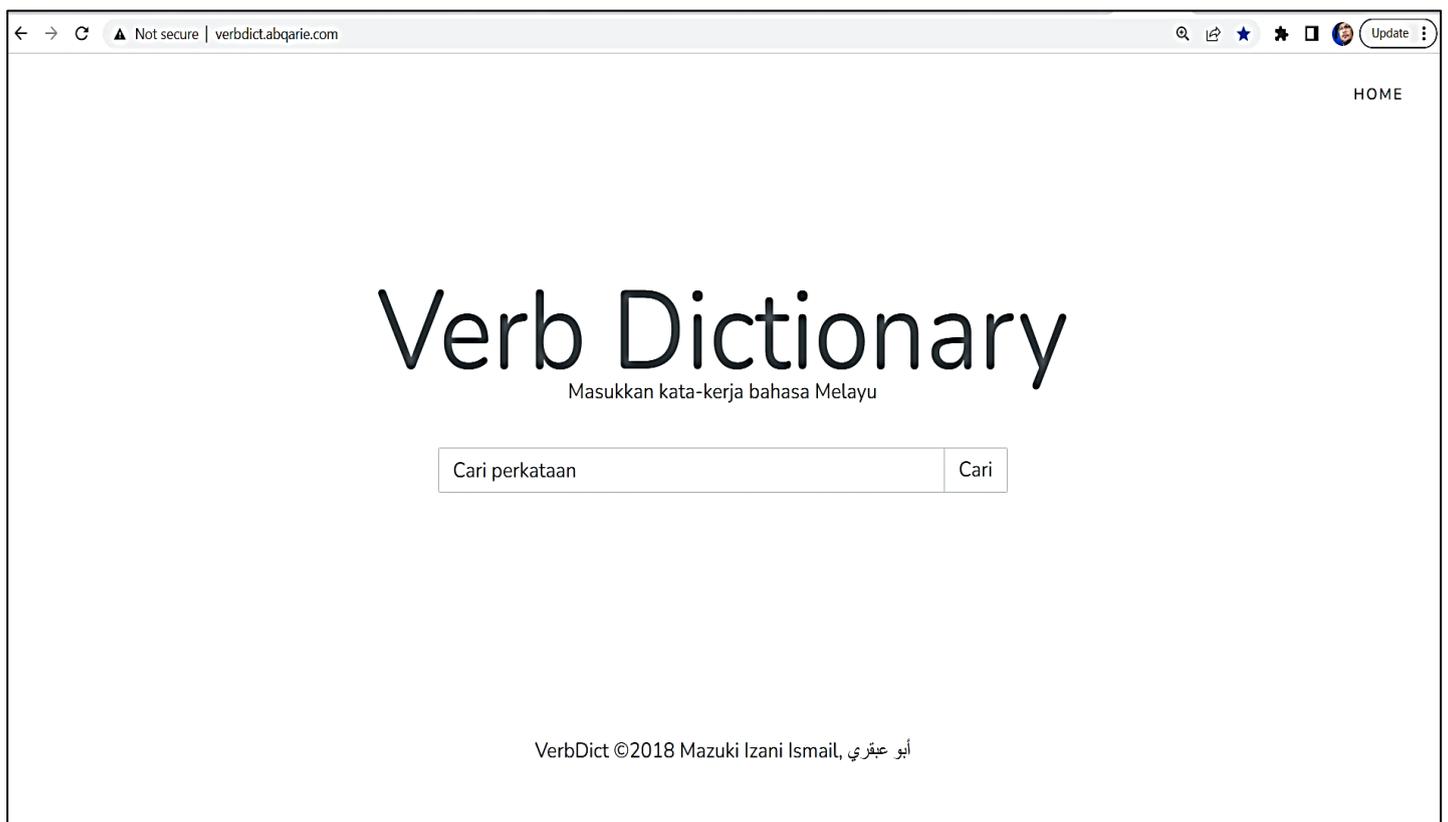


Figure 1: VerbDict website homepage

The Use of Dictionaries and Students' Perceptions of Their Usefulness

Online dictionaries is now a very important tool in the language learning process. In the context of learning among students, online dictionaries are widely applied in various learning activities such as review sessions, simulations, script preparation, as well as Arabic text reading and writing exercises or dialogues. Students frequently use online dictionaries to check the meaning of words as well as understand the linguistic context more deeply. Despite the existence of technical challenges such as internet connection problems, the use of online dictionaries has proven to be effective in helping to improve language proficiency among students (Jin & Deifell, 2013; Siregar et al., 2024).

In the context of more specific learning activities, online dictionaries play a significant role. During the simulation activity and preparation of the acting script, students refer to this dictionary to examine the meaning of words as well as the correct sentence structure (Jin & Deifell, 2013). Also, for reading and writing skills, online dictionaries help students produce Arabic texts more accurately. This assistance is particularly

significant in the aspect of identifying idiomatic meanings and ensuring the use of words that coincide with the desired context (Mat et al., 2023; Siregar et al., 2024).

From a student's point of view, the use of online dictionaries is viewed positively because of their convenience and effectiveness. Students find it meets their need to retrieve the meaning of words quickly and accurately, which directly contributes to increased productivity as well as academic achievement. The ability to complete tasks more efficiently makes an online dictionary a very valuable tool (Latifah & Surendran, 2012; Ismail & Yusoff, 2023). However, despite the wide range of benefits offered, challenges such as difficulty in understanding the more detailed meaning and the need for a stable internet still exist. Therefore, the provision of proper training and guidance is essential so that students can take full advantage of the potential of this online dictionary (Siregar et al., 2024).

METHODOLOGY

This study which employs quantitative approach was conducted on students who took Arabic as a third language course at UiTM Kelantan Branch. The sample was purposively selected from four faculties with a total of 136 respondents. As suggested by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), 127 respondents were required from a total population of 190 students who took Arabic from four faculties selected from UiTM Kelantan Branch. Of the 150 questionnaire forms distributed, 136 (90.6%) questionnaires were usable. While there is no universal 'magic number' for sample size, a total of around 100 to 200 respondents is often considered sufficient for a descriptive study, especially at the student or early stage level, as it offers a balance between reasonable statistical accuracy and the practical constraints of research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016; Salkind, 2017). Therefore, this number is sufficient to give a more detailed picture of the use of dictionaries among students at UiTM Kelantan Branch.

The questionnaire is divided into three parts. Part A deals with demographic information such as gender, age, state, faculty, and Arabic subject code. Part B deals with the elements of online dictionary usage, while Part C relates to students' perceptions of the usefulness of online dictionaries. All study items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree - strongly agree). A value of 1 indicates the lowest level of agreement, while a value of 5 indicates the highest level of agreement with the question or statement stated. This study instrument has been pretested to ensure its reliability. The Alpha Cronbach value for the five items of dictionary usage was 0.950, while the value of the six items of dictionary usage was 0.957. An Alpha Cronbach value above 0.6 indicates that the reliability of the questionnaire item is at an acceptable level (Kline, 2011).

The data analysis started with a data cleansing process involving several tests, such as incomplete data and remote data detection. Of the total number of questionnaires distributed, 136 good and problem-free data were retained for further analysis purposes. Next, the Statistical Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27.0 was used. The analysis was carried out in accordance with the objectives of the study. The results are explained in a table to allow to understand the research findings more clearly. The analysis carried out involved descriptive statistics, frequency analysis, and reliability tests.

FINDINGS

As explained earlier, the objective of this study was to examine to examine (a) UiTM Kelantan Branch students' evaluation on the use of the VerbDict dictionary and (b) their perception of the usefulness of this Arabic verb dictionary. In order to answer both study objectives, a descriptive analysis using SPSS software was conducted.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The respondents of this study consisted of 136 students. The majority of them were girls, which was 75.0% (n=102), while male students was 25.0% (n=34). In terms of age, the largest group was represented by students aged 22 years at 48.5% (n=66), followed by students aged 21 at 20.6% (n=28). Referring the home state, the majority of students are from Kelantan (46.3%, n=63), followed by Selangor (14.0%, n=19) and Terengganu (10.3%, n=14). The rest were students from other states who made up the percentage of respondents of 29.4%.

The results by faculty indicate that the Faculty of Business Management accounted for the highest number of learners at 47.8% (n=65), followed by the Faculty of Accounting at 26.5% (n=36) and the Faculty of Computer Science & Mathematics at 19.9% (n=27). Finally, more than half of the respondents followed the Arabic course code TAC501 (50.7%, n=69), followed by TAC451 (28.7%, n=39) and TAC401 (19.9%, n=27). A summary of student demographic information is as follows:

Table 1: Respondent Profile

Respondent Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	34	25.0
	Female	102	75.0
Age	20 and below	18	13.3
	21	28	20.6
	22	66	48.5
	23 and above	23	16.9
State of Origin	Kelantan	63	46.3
	Selangor	19	14.0
	Terengganu	14	10.3
	Other states	40	29.4
Faculty	Business Management	65	47.8
	Accounting	36	26.5
	Computer Science & Maths	27	19.9
	Administrative Science	8	5.9
Arabic Course Code	TAC501	69	50.7
	TAC451	39	28.7
	TAC401	27	19.9
	TAC101	1	0.7

Source: Author (2026)

Descriptive Analysis

A descriptive analysis using SPSS software was carried out to see the level of use of the UiTM Arabic verb dictionary among UiTM Kelantan Branch students and their perceptions of the usefulness of the dictionary.

Use of VerbDict Dictionary

The findings obtained from the questionnaire form were evaluated using the average of each element of the level of use (M) and standard deviation (SP) in determining the respondents' perception of the five elements of the level of use of the language verb dictionary. The mean score values from 1.00 to 2.00 are interpreted as low, 2.01 to 3.00 as moderately low, 3.01 to 4.00 as moderately high, and 4.01 to 5.00 as high (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

The results of the analysis showed that the mean value was between 4.06 and 4.15. The study respondents assessed at a high level all the elements of the level of use of the Arabic verb dictionary, i.e., they used this dictionary to perform role-play tasks, to perform simulation tasks, to read Arabic dialogues and texts, and to write Arabic dialogues and texts, as well as for the purpose of reviewing the topics studied. The findings of this analysis are supported by the respondents' high level of agreement with all elements of the dictionary usage level, with a standard deviation value (SP) between 0.82 and 0.92. The reliability analysis of online dictionary usage items is at a high level with a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.95, above the pre-established level of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). A summary of respondents' perceptions of the five elements of dictionary usage levels is explained in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents' Assessment of the Use of the VerbDict Dictionary

Item	M	SD	Level
1. Review topics learned	4.06	.917	High
2. Simulation assignment implementation	4.14	.800	High
3. Execution of Role-Play tasks	4.15	.824	High
4. Reading Arabic dialogue and text	4.14	.827	High
5. Writing Arabic dialogue and text	4.13	.833	High

M: mean, SD: standard deviation.

Source: Author (2026)

Students' Perception of the Usefulness of the VerbDict Dictionary

Table 3 describes students' perceptions regarding the usefulness of using Arabic word dictionaries. The data shows the mean value is between 4.35 and 4.45. The survey respondents assessed at a high level all the perceptual elements of the use of Arabic verb dictionaries, namely the effectiveness of Arabic language learning, usefulness, simplicity, speed, increased productivity, and improved Arabic learning achievement. The findings of this analysis are supported by a high level of respondents' agreement with all elements of respondents' perception of the usefulness of the use of dictionaries with a standard deviation value (SP) between 0.64 and 0.69. The reliability analysis of online dictionary usage items is at a high level with a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.96, above the pre-established level of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). A summary of respondents' perceptions of the six elements of the usefulness of dictionary are explained in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Respondents' Perception of the Usefulness of the VerbDict Dictionary

Item	M	SD	Level
1. Making learning Arabic easier.	4.45	.653	High
2. Useful in learning Arabic.	4.43	.641	High
3. Increase the effectiveness of Arabic language learning.	4.36	.663	High
4. Quickly complete Arabic assignments.	4.35	.683	High
5. Increase Arabic learning productivity.	4.35	.694	High
6. Improve Arabic language learning achievement.	4.35	.673	High

M: mean, SD: standard deviation.

Source: Author (2026)

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to examine the level of use of the Arabic verb dictionary VerbDict among students of UiTM Kelantan Branch and their perceptions regarding the usefulness of using the dictionary. The findings showed that students' assessment of the five elements of VerbDict dictionary use was good, with all of them being rated at a high level. Students use this dictionary to perform role-play assignments and simulation assignments, read Arabic dialogues and texts, write Arabic dialogues and texts, and review the topics studied. The same goes for students' perceptions regarding the usefulness of the Arabic verb dictionary VerbDict. They assessed the usefulness of the dictionary at a high level of all elements of perception of the usefulness of the Arabic verb dictionary VerbDict, which is to make learning Arabic easier, be useful in learning Arabic, increase the effectiveness of Arabic learning, complete Arabic tasks quickly, increase the productivity of Arabic learning, and improve Arabic learning achievement.

For the first objective, the findings showed that the respondents' views on the elements of the use of the Arabic verb dictionary VerbDict were consistent and positive. The implementation element of the role-play task was

assessed at the highest level. In addition, the aspects of carrying out simulation assignments, reading and writing dialogues and Arabic texts, and the purpose of reviewing topics also recorded high scores. This proves that the level of use of the VerbDict dictionary among UiTM Kelantan Branch students is at a good and satisfactory level. These findings support a literature review that states that online dictionaries are widely used in various learning activities such as review sessions, simulations, preparation of acting scripts, as well as Arabic text reading and dialogue writing exercises (Jin & Deifell, 2013; Siregar et al., 2024). Furthermore, the use of dictionaries during simulation activities and script preparation helps students check the correct meaning of words and sentence structures, while in terms of reading and writing skills, it helps in the production of more accurate Arabic texts (Jin & Deifell, 2013; Mat et al., 2023; Siregar et al., 2024).

For the second objective, students' perception of the usefulness of the VerbDict dictionary was also found to be high, especially for the factor of the effectiveness of learning Arabic. Respondents also assessed the aspects of usability, convenience, speed, increased productivity, and learning achievement at a high level. This positive rating indicates that the VerbDict dictionary is well-received and satisfactory among students. These findings are in line with the finding that the use of online dictionaries is viewed positively by students due to their ease and effectiveness in meeting the need to retrieve the meaning of words quickly and accurately, which directly contributes to increased productivity as well as academic achievement (Latifah & Surendran, 2012; Ismail & Yusoff, 2023). The ability to complete tasks more efficiently makes online dictionaries a very valuable tool (Latifah & Surendran, 2012; Ismail & Yusoff, 2023).

Overall, the findings of this study are in line with previous studies that have found that the selection and use of dictionaries—whether digital or print—help students understand reading texts more easily and motivate them in language (Haryati, Ahmad Yazid, Maimun Aqsha & Mohd Isa, 2019; Ratmini & Dahlia, 2019).

CONCLUSION

This study clearly shows that the Arabic verb dictionary, VerbDict, is actively used at a satisfactory level among students at UiTM Kelantan Branch with a high level of VerbDict usage. These findings are also supported by the students' ability to effectively leverage the dictionary to complete a variety of language tasks, including practical exercises such as role-playing and simulation activities. Furthermore, students consistently expressed very positive perceptions of the usefulness of VerbDict, asserting that its use can significantly improve their learning effectiveness, academic achievement, and overall productivity in Arabic language acquisition. This online dictionary has been shown to streamline the process of mastering Arabic verbs, making it easier and faster for students, thus aligning with the consistent positive effects of online dictionaries reported in previous language education research.

The VerbDict online dictionary is still limited in its use among students of the UiTM Kelantan Branch. However, the findings of this study provide important empirical evidence confirming its importance and usefulness. The findings of the study provide the clear use of VerbDict and the positive perception of students about its usefulness fills a significant gap in the existing studies. The featured use and high acceptance of the VerbDict online dictionary as a valuable pedagogical resource offer an additional solution in improving verb mastery, which is a fundamental component of Arabic language mastery.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of the preliminary study showed positive results in the use of VerbDict among students at UiTM Kelantan Branch. Therefore, it is suggested that its use is extended to all language education campuses and institutions in the country to maximize its benefits. We propose conducting a study outside UiTM Kelantan with a larger number of respondents for future research. A comparative study of the use of the VerbDict online dictionary with other online dictionaries can also be carried out. Studies using the mixed-method method are also proposed to be conducted to obtain more accurate and robust results. To get a detailed overview of its use, the TAM model can be used in future studies. In addition, a more in-depth study related to students' strategies in overcoming technical challenges or when dealing with complex linguistic patterns encountered while using them should be done. Additionally, long-term research is also important in assessing the ongoing impact of VerbDict on students' vocabulary acquisition and communication skills in the context of the Arabic language.

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