Dictionary Proficiency And Usage Among STAM Students In Arabic Language Learning

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Nuraznan Jaafar*[1], Mohd Zahimie Mohd Dzahid[2], Fahmi Fisol[3]
[123]Pusat Bahasa Dan Pengajian Umum, Universiti Islam Melaka, Malaysia
nuraznan@unimel.edu.my[1], zahimie@unimel.edu.my[2], fahmifisol@unimel.edu.my[3]

Abstract
This study aims to identify the level of dictionary proficiency and usage among Sijil Tinggi Agama Malaysia (STAM) students in the context of Arabic language learning. A strong command of vocabulary constitutes a fundamental element in understanding Arabic texts, particularly complex *turath* texts; therefore, the use of dictionaries is regarded as an important learning strategy. This study employed a quantitative survey design involving 81 students from three Government-Aided Religious Schools (SABK). The research instrument was a questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale, encompassing constructs of dictionary proficiency and usage. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, namely mean and standard deviation. The findings indicate that the level of dictionary proficiency is high, with a mean value of 4.0309 (SD = 0.48021), while the level of dictionary usage is also high, with a mean value of 4.0401 (SD = 0.44937). Item-level analysis shows that students demonstrate a good ability to understand dictionary content and actively use dictionaries in various learning situations, particularly in comprehending texts and completing tasks. However, several weaknesses were identified in understanding symbols and abbreviations in dictionaries. Overall, this study demonstrates that dictionary proficiency and usage play a significant role as self-directed learning strategies among STAM students. The findings suggest that dictionary skills training should be strengthened in Arabic language instruction, and greater exposure to various types of dictionaries, including digital dictionaries, should be enhanced to improve learning effectiveness.
Keywords: Dictionary; Proficiency; Arabic Vocabulary; Print and Digital Dictionaries

INTRODUCTION

The learning of Arabic as a second language within the context of Islamic education, particularly among Sijil Tinggi Agama Malaysia (STAM) students, requires a high level of vocabulary proficiency as well as the ability to comprehend complex linguistic structures. This is because students are not only exposed to modern texts but are also required to understand classical texts such as *turath* literature, which is rich in specialized terminology and intricate syntactic structures. Therefore, vocabulary mastery is considered a fundamental basis for ensuring effective Arabic language learning (Nation, 2001).

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In strengthening vocabulary acquisition, the use of dictionaries represents an essential learning strategy that is inseparable from the language learning process (Adamska-Sałaciak & Kernerman, 2016). Dictionaries function as primary reference tools that assist students in understanding word meanings, identifying the use of terms, and interpreting textual contexts more accurately (Schmitt, 2000). In addition, the use of dictionaries can enhance students' ability to learn independently (Petrylaitė et al., 2008), as dictionaries function as a learning strategy that helps students understand and explore meanings autonomously, in line with the demands of 21st-century learning which emphasize learner autonomy (Rahmat et al., 2021).

The development of information technology has also influenced the way students use dictionaries. While printed dictionaries were once the primary reference, digital dictionaries are increasingly preferred due to their accessibility and speed in retrieving word meanings (Lew, 2015). Studies have shown that digital dictionaries are perceived as more effective and practical than printed dictionaries in supporting language learning, particularly in understanding vocabulary and Arabic texts (Ilham, 2023). However, the effectiveness of dictionary use, whether printed or digital, depends on students' level of mastery of the dictionary's structure and functions.

In the context of STAM students, the ability to use dictionaries effectively is crucial, as they are required to comprehend various types of Arabic texts within a limited timeframe. However, not all students possess the same level of dictionary proficiency. Some learners tend to use dictionaries at a basic level without fully understanding the information provided, such as symbols, abbreviations, and variations in word meanings. This indicates that effective dictionary use requires specific skills and an understanding of lexicographic structures, which are not fully mastered by all learners (Scholfield, 1982; Nesi, 1999; Nasimah Abdullah et al., 2023).

Previous studies have demonstrated a significant relationship between dictionary proficiency and language learning effectiveness. Students who are skilled in using dictionaries tend to comprehend texts more easily and achieve higher academic performance (Ismail & Hassan, 2022). Furthermore, consistent dictionary use is associated with improved self-directed learning abilities among students (Zulkifli et al., 2022). Although numerous studies have examined dictionary use in language learning, research focusing specifically on STAM students remains limited. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the level of dictionary proficiency and usage among STAM students, particularly in the context of Arabic language learning. Accordingly, this study aims to identify the level of dictionary proficiency and usage among STAM students. It is expected that this study will provide a clearer understanding of the role of dictionaries in Arabic language learning and assist stakeholders in developing more effective teaching strategies.

Vocabulary proficiency is a fundamental component in second language learning, including Arabic. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, students may encounter difficulties in comprehending texts and conveying meaning accurately. According to Nation (2001), vocabulary proficiency involves not only knowledge of word meanings but also the ability to use words appropriately across various contexts. In efforts to enhance vocabulary acquisition, dictionary use is considered one of the most effective learning strategies. Schmitt (2000) states that dictionaries assist learners in developing a deeper understanding of word meanings and improving their ability

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to use language accurately. Additionally, dictionary use enables students to identify multiple meanings of words, thereby enhancing their comprehension of texts.

A study by Laufer and Hill (2000) found that dictionary use, particularly in digital form, improves students' efficiency in retrieving word meanings and supports long-term vocabulary retention. However, the effectiveness of dictionary use depends on learners' proficiency in utilizing dictionaries. Recent studies have also emphasized the importance of dictionary proficiency in Arabic language learning. For instance, Hakimi Abdul Halim (2024) found that students with higher levels of dictionary proficiency demonstrated significant improvement in their comprehension of Arabic texts, as well as enhanced language skills, particularly in acquiring and understanding meaning. These findings highlight the important role of dictionary proficiency in supporting Arabic language learning.

In addition, Haryati Yaacob (2020) reported that the selection and use of dictionaries can assist learners in Arabic language learning and influence their purposes for dictionary use. With regard to learners' interest, Nurul Aminah (2015) noted that dictionaries serve as an engaging medium that can stimulate children's interest in language learning, while well-designed dictionary entries or lemmas can effectively support vocabulary development. Collectively, these studies provide a general overview of the importance of dictionary proficiency and usage in Arabic language learning. Furthermore, consistent dictionary use has been shown to enhance self-directed learning among students. Studies by Nation (2001) and Scholfield (1982) indicate that learners who frequently use dictionaries are more independent in understanding texts and less reliant on teacher assistance. Similarly, Bensoussan et al. (1984) found that dictionary use improves reading comprehension and learner autonomy in language learning.

In the context of digital dictionaries, studies have shown that ease of access and rapid retrieval of meanings make digital dictionaries a preferred choice among students (Suriani Sudi et al., 2023; Roesnita & Zainab, 2013). However, effective use still depends on mastery of fundamental skills, particularly in understanding dictionary structure and search strategies (Nasimah Abdullah et al., 2023). This suggests that technology alone is insufficient without proper usage literacy. In addition, several studies have reported that students often face challenges when using dictionaries, particularly in selecting the appropriate meaning and understanding words with multiple meanings (polysemy). A study by Wan Moharani Mohammad et al. (2005) found that weaknesses in understanding dictionary structure make it difficult for students to determine accurate word meanings. Ahmad Asyraf Mat Ali et al. (2017) showed that ineffective dictionary use may negatively affect students' comprehension of texts. This is supported by a study by Farizah Hashim and Nur Farahkhanna (2024), which found that semantic ambiguity, such as homonymy, also contributes to students' confusion in understanding the actual context of a word. Overall, the literature review indicates that dictionary proficiency and usage are interrelated elements in enhancing the effectiveness of Arabic language learning. Although dictionary use is regarded as an important strategy, its level of proficiency among students still requires further investigation, particularly in the context of STAM students.

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Sijil Tinggi Agama Malaysia (STAM) students are generally exposed to academically oriented Arabic texts with a high level of difficulty, particularly *turath* texts that are rich in specialized terminology and complex linguistic structures. In this context, vocabulary proficiency is a fundamental element that determines students' level of comprehension of the learning content. Consequently, dictionary use becomes an essential requirement in assisting students to understand word meanings and sentence contexts more accurately (Rosni Samah, 2012).

However, previous studies indicate that dictionary use among students does not necessarily reflect actual proficiency. Studies by Scholfield (1982) and Nesi and Haill (2002) found that learners often face difficulties in understanding symbols, abbreviations, and lexicographic information in dictionaries. Furthermore, Laufer (1997) emphasized that students frequently fail to select the appropriate meaning when words have multiple meanings (*polysemy*), thereby affecting their comprehension of texts. In this regard, Tono (2001) explained that dictionary use requires specific skills that need to be systematically learned. These findings are further supported by local studies by Wan Moharani Mohammad et al. (2005) and Ahmad Asyraf Mat Ali et al. (2017), which demonstrate that weaknesses in dictionary skills hinder students from using dictionaries effectively.

In addition, advancements in information technology have led to increased use of digital dictionaries among students. Although digital dictionaries offer advantages in terms of speed and accessibility, their use raises concerns regarding students' actual level of lexicographic proficiency. There is a tendency among students to rely on instant translations without engaging in deeper processes such as understanding word structure, root forms, and contextual usage. This situation may hinder the holistic development of vocabulary proficiency and reduce students' ability to think critically when interpreting Arabic texts (Huda & Mulyadi, 2020). Moreover, studies in the context of Arabic language education in Malaysia and Indonesia have shown that students often face challenges in reading and text comprehension due to a lack of effective learning strategies, including dictionary use. These limitations not only affect students' comprehension but also influence their overall academic performance (Nik Mohd Rahimi et al., 2019; Suryani, 2021).

Although numerous studies have discussed dictionary use in language learning, research specifically focusing on the level of dictionary proficiency and usage among STAM students remains limited. The lack of empirical studies in this context results in insufficient data to inform the development of more effective teaching strategies and interventions tailored to students' needs. Accordingly, this study is conducted to identify the level of dictionary proficiency and usage among STAM students. It is expected that this study will contribute to filling the gap in the existing literature and provide useful empirical insights for schools, teachers, and policymakers in enhancing the effectiveness of Arabic language teaching and learning.

In line with the research questions, this study is conducted with the aim of achieving several key objectives. These objectives are formulated to provide a clear and comprehensive understanding of dictionary proficiency and usage among STAM students. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to identify the level of dictionary proficiency among STAM students, and identify the level of dictionary usage among STAM students.

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METHOD

This study employed a quantitative survey approach to identify the level of dictionary proficiency and usage among STAM students. This research design was selected as it enables systematic data collection and facilitates the analysis of respondents' tendencies toward the variables under investigation. The sample consisted of 81 STAM students at the pre-university level, selected from three Government-Aided Religious Schools (SABK). A purposive sampling technique was employed, involving students who were enrolled in the STAM program and had been exposed to dictionary use in Arabic language learning.

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire developed based on the constructs of dictionary proficiency and usage. The questionnaire was divided into two main sections: Section B (dictionary proficiency) and Section C (dictionary usage), each comprising several items related to dictionary skills and usage practices in learning. Each item was measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), focusing on descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation. The interpretation of levels was based on predetermined mean score ranges: low (1.00–2.33), moderate (2.34–3.67), and high (3.68–5.00).

The validity of the research instrument was established through expert review to ensure that the questionnaire items were appropriate, clear, and aligned with the study objectives. In this study, the questionnaire instrument used to measure dictionary proficiency and usage was validated by three experts in the field of Arabic language from the Faculty of Languages and Communication, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), Terengganu. The experts' recommendations included improvements in sentence clarity, appropriateness of terminology, and alignment of items with the study constructs. All feedback and suggestions were carefully considered, and necessary revisions were made to the questionnaire items prior to data collection. This process is essential to ensure a high level of content validity and to enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of the instrument in measuring the study variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dictionary Proficiency and Usage Levels

Table 1 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for dictionary proficiency and usage among the respondents.

Table 1. Levels of Dictionary Proficiency and Usage

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Dictionary Proficiency	4.0309	0.48021	High
Dictionary Usage	4.0401	0.44937	High

Based on Table 1, the findings indicate that both constructs are at a high level. Dictionary usage recorded a slightly higher mean score compared to dictionary proficiency. However, the difference is minimal, suggesting that both aspects progress in parallel. These findings suggest that students not only possess knowledge of dictionary use but also apply it consistently in Arabic language learning contexts.

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Table 2. Item Analysis of Dictionary Proficiency

Item	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
B1	I am able to find the meaning of Arabic words in a dictionary easily.	4.12	0.620	High
B2	I understand the information provided in dictionary entries.	3.99	0.698	High
B3	I am able to select the most appropriate meaning of a word according to the context of a sentence.	3.84	0.661	High
B4	I understand Arabic symbols used in dictionaries.	3.80	0.749	High
B5	I understand Arabic abbreviations used in dictionaries.	3.54	0.791	High
B6	I understand the punctuation and notation used in dictionaries.	3.91	0.656	High
B7	I feel confident when learning Arabic using a dictionary.	4.35	0.727	High
B8	I know the arrangement of words in an Arabic dictionary.	4.30	0.697	High
B9	I am able to use a dictionary without teacher assistance.	4.26	0.755	High
B10	I understand the difference between literal meaning of a word.	3.73	0.775	High
B11	I understand the difference between contextual meaning of a word.	3.89	0.689	High
B12	I can use a dictionary to identify noun forms (*al-ism*).	4.25	0.716	High
B13	I can use a dictionary to identify verb forms (*al-fi'l*).	4.25	0.734	High
B14	I can use a dictionary to identify particle forms (*al-harf*).	4.21	0.802	High

The descriptive analysis of dictionary proficiency shows that all items recorded high mean scores, with all values exceeding 3.50. This indicates that respondents generally demonstrate a strong level of dictionary proficiency in Arabic language learning, both in terms of understanding dictionary content and applying dictionary skills in learning activities. Specifically, Item B7 (M = 4.35, SD = 0.727) recorded the highest mean score, indicating that respondents exhibit a high level of confidence in using dictionaries when learning Arabic. This is followed by Item B8 (M = 4.30, SD = 0.697) and Item B9 (M = 4.26, SD = 0.755), which reflect students' ability to understand word arrangement in dictionaries and their capacity to use dictionaries independently without teacher assistance. These findings suggest a relatively strong level of learner autonomy among the respondents.

In addition, items related to dictionary structure and content comprehension, namely B1, B2, B3, B4, B6, B10, and B11, also recorded high mean values (ranging from 3.73 to 4.12). This indicates that respondents are not only able to understand dictionary entries but are also capable of selecting appropriate meanings based on context, as well as understanding symbols, notation, and semantic differences of words. These findings suggest that dictionary use among respondents involves a relatively comprehensive level of linguistic understanding rather than mere literal word lookup. However, Item B5 (M = 3.54, SD = 0.791) recorded the lowest mean score, although still at a high level. This suggests that understanding of Arabic abbreviations in dictionaries remains relatively weaker compared to other aspects and requires greater emphasis in teaching and learning practices.

Overall, the findings indicate that dictionary proficiency among respondents is high and encouraging. The main strengths lie in confidence in usage, understanding of dictionary structure, and the ability to use dictionaries independently. Nevertheless, certain aspects—particularly

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understanding dictionary abbreviations—should be further strengthened to enhance the effectiveness of dictionary use in Arabic language learning.

Figure 1. Diagram of Item Analysis of Dictionary Mastery Level

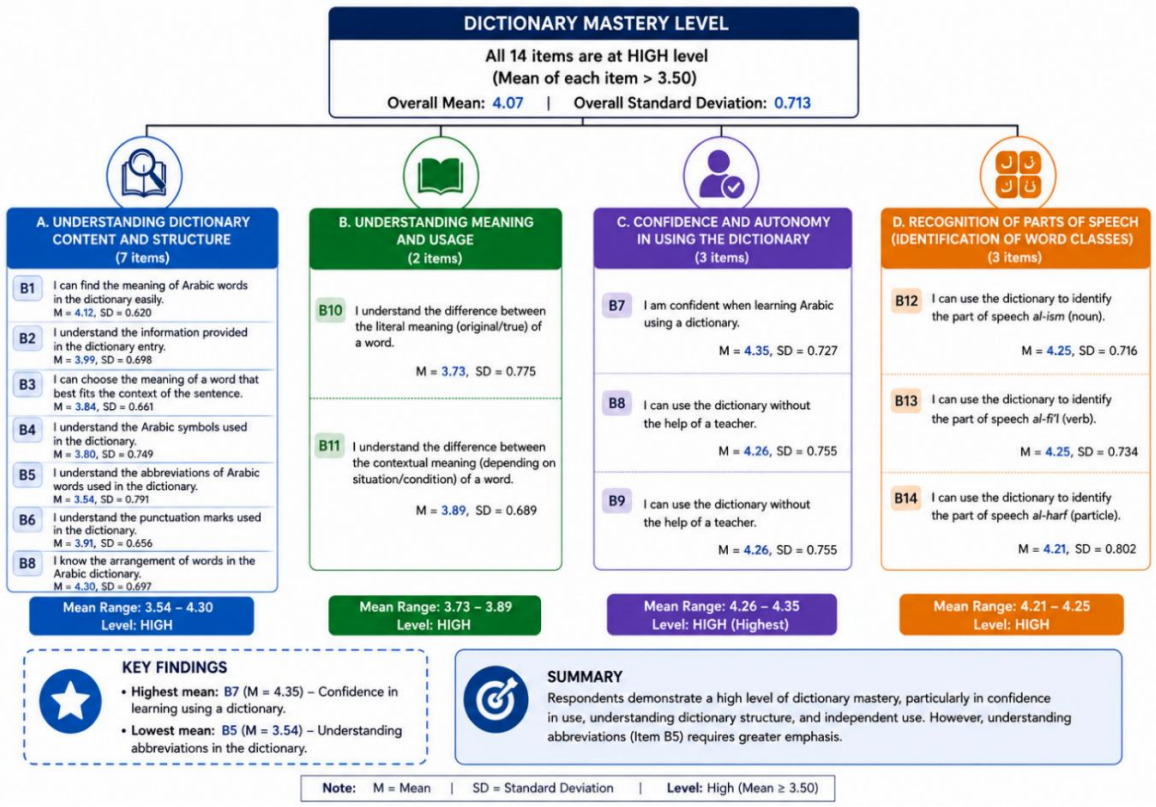


Table 3. Item Analysis of Dictionary Usage

Item	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
C1	I frequently use printed dictionaries during learning.	3.80	0.872	High
C2	I frequently use digital dictionaries during learning.	3.57	0.999	Moderate
C3	I use dictionaries when understanding Arabic texts.	4.09	0.728	High
C4	I use dictionaries when understanding Arabic *turath* texts.	4.06	0.796	High
C5	I use dictionaries when completing assignments or exercises.	4.16	0.732	High
C6	Digital dictionaries help me find word meanings quickly.	4.36	0.677	High
C7	I use printed dictionaries during classroom learning.	4.05	0.879	High
C8	I use digital dictionaries outside classroom learning hours.	4.19	0.776	High
C9	I tend to use digital dictionaries more than printed dictionaries.	3.98	0.987	High
C10	I use more than one type of dictionary.	3.67	1.012	High
C11	I prefer Malay–Arabic and Arabic–Malay dictionaries.	4.57	0.724	High
C12	I rarely use Arabic–Arabic dictionaries.	4.00	1.061	High

The descriptive analysis of dictionary usage indicates that the majority of items recorded high mean scores, with most values exceeding 3.68. This suggests that respondents generally engage in frequent dictionary use in Arabic language learning, whether for understanding texts, completing assignments, or supporting self-directed learning. Specifically, Item C11 (M = 4.57, SD = 0.724)

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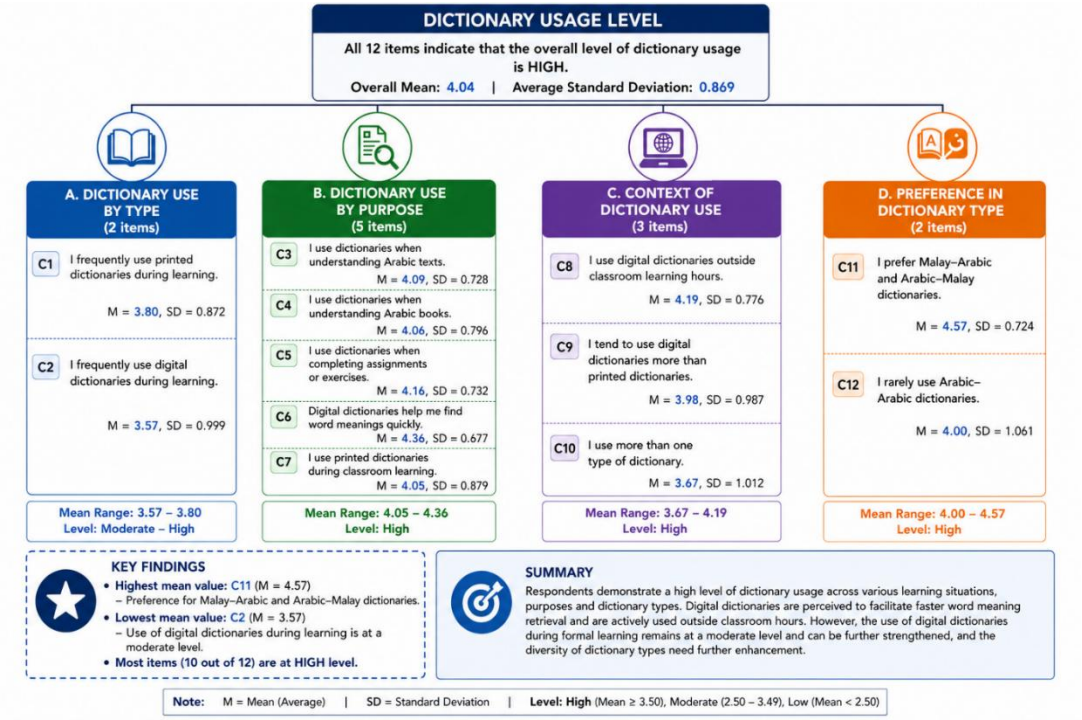
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recorded the highest mean score, indicating a strong preference among respondents for bilingual Malay–Arabic and Arabic–Malay dictionaries. This is followed by Item C6 (M = 4.36, SD = 0.677), which shows that digital dictionaries are perceived as highly effective in facilitating rapid word meaning retrieval. Similarly, Items C8 (M = 4.19, SD = 0.776) and C5 (M = 4.16, SD = 0.732) reflect active dictionary use outside classroom hours and in completing academic tasks.

Furthermore, Items C3, C4, and C7 (M ranging from 4.05 to 4.09) indicate consistent dictionary use in understanding Arabic texts and *turath* literature, including during classroom learning sessions. These findings suggest that dictionaries serve as a key supporting tool in enhancing comprehension of Arabic learning materials. However, some items recorded comparatively lower mean scores. Item C2 (M = 3.57, SD = 0.999) falls within the moderate level, indicating that the use of digital dictionaries during formal learning sessions is not yet fully widespread among respondents. In addition, Item C10 (M = 3.67, SD = 1.012) suggests a moderate tendency toward the use of multiple dictionary types, indicating that some students still rely on a single type of dictionary. Moreover, Item C12 (M = 4.00, SD = 1.061) indicates a relatively lower reliance on Arabic–Arabic dictionaries. This may be attributed to their higher level of difficulty compared to bilingual dictionaries, leading students to prefer more accessible and user-friendly reference sources.

Overall, the findings indicate that dictionary usage among respondents is high and active. Dictionary use is not limited to formal classroom learning but also extends to independent learning outside the classroom. Nevertheless, aspects related to diversity of dictionary use and greater utilization of digital dictionaries in specific contexts could be further enhanced to maximize the effectiveness of Arabic language learning.

Figure 2. Item Analysis Diagram of Dictionary Usage



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Alignment with Previous Studies

The findings of this study indicate that the level of dictionary proficiency among STAM students is high. This suggests that students possess a strong foundation in understanding the structure and functions of dictionaries, including the ability to identify word meanings and select meanings appropriately according to context. These findings are consistent with the view that vocabulary mastery is a fundamental component of second language learning, in which dictionaries function as a primary tool for strengthening learners' lexical comprehension (Nation, 2001). In addition, the high level of dictionary usage indicates that students not only possess the necessary skills but also apply them consistently throughout the learning process. This reflects that dictionaries have become an integral part of students' self-directed learning strategies. These findings support previous studies which emphasize that active dictionary use enhances learner autonomy and reduces dependence on teachers in understanding texts (Schmitt, 2000). The relatively balanced levels of dictionary proficiency and usage further suggest a close relationship between these two constructs. Students with higher levels of dictionary proficiency tend to use dictionaries more frequently in their learning. This is in line with the findings of Chen (2025), which indicate that learners with higher language proficiency are more likely to employ learning strategies such as dictionary use more frequently and effectively. Similarly, Nesi (1999) argues that dictionary use skills significantly influence both the effectiveness and frequency of dictionary use among learners.

An analysis of dictionary proficiency items shows that students demonstrate a good ability to understand fundamental dictionary information, including word arrangement and meaning selection. However, the findings also reveal certain weaknesses, particularly in understanding symbols and abbreviations used in dictionaries. This indicates that dictionary proficiency involves not only basic skills but also requires deeper understanding of the internal structure of dictionaries. This finding is consistent with studies by Scholfield (1982) and Nesi (1999), which highlight that effective dictionary use requires familiarity with lexicographic structures such as symbols, labels, and entry organization. From the perspective of dictionary usage, the findings show that students actively use dictionaries across various learning situations, particularly in understanding texts and completing assignments. This consistent use reflects students' awareness of the importance of dictionaries in Arabic language learning. These findings align with studies by Laufer and Hill (2000), as well as more recent research by You Hsuan Chang et al. (2026), which demonstrate that frequent and strategic dictionary use enhances learners' comprehension of second language texts.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that students show a preference for bilingual dictionaries over Arabic–Arabic dictionaries. This may be due to the higher level of difficulty associated with monolingual dictionaries, which require greater language proficiency. These findings are consistent with Laufer and Kimmel (1997), who found that second language learners tend to prefer bilingual dictionaries as they provide direct translations and are easier to understand, particularly for lower- and intermediate-level learners.

The use of digital dictionaries among students also shows a positive trend, although it has not fully replaced the use of printed dictionaries. This may be influenced by factors such as

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familiarity and trust in traditional reference sources. Nevertheless, this trend indicates that students are increasingly open to integrating technology into their learning, in line with current educational developments. These findings are supported by studies such as Knežević et al. (2021) and Suriani Sudi et al. (2023), which highlight that ease of access and advancements in digital technology have increased learners' tendency to use electronic dictionaries in language learning.

Divergence from Previous Studies

However, several studies have reported findings that differ from those of the present study. For instance, although this study found that students tend to prefer bilingual dictionaries, some researchers argue that monolingual dictionaries are more effective in enhancing second language proficiency, as they expose learners directly to the target language without reliance on translation (Aboghunaim, 2019). This suggests that while bilingual dictionaries are more user-friendly, they may not yield optimal learning outcomes in the long term. In addition, some studies highlight that the use of bilingual dictionaries may lead to errors in comprehension and language use, as learners tend to rely on literal translations without fully understanding the contextual meaning of words (Anida, 2013). This contrasts with the findings of the present study, which indicate that bilingual dictionaries facilitate easier understanding of word meanings among students. Furthermore, although this study demonstrates that students actively use dictionaries in their learning, other studies have found that dictionary use among learners remains at a moderate and inconsistent level, particularly when students face difficulties in understanding how to use dictionaries effectively (Hakimi,2025). This suggests that the level of dictionary use skills plays a crucial role in determining the frequency of usage.

From the perspective of digital dictionary use, although the present study indicates that students are increasingly open to using technology, some studies argue that digital dictionaries do not necessarily offer clear advantages if learners lack effective usage strategies. In fact, inaccuracies in definitions or misuse of digital dictionaries may lead to misinterpretation of meanings and hinder learners' comprehension (Wang, 2025). This highlights that technology alone is insufficient without adequate dictionary literacy skills. In addition, the limited use of digital dictionaries in school settings should also be considered, as most schools in Malaysia still rely primarily on printed dictionaries in the learning process. The use of digital dictionaries typically becomes more prevalent at the university level, where students have greater access to mobile devices and laptops. Overall, these differences in findings indicate that the use and effectiveness of dictionaries in language learning depend on multiple factors, including learners' proficiency levels, the types of dictionaries used, and their ability to access and interpret dictionary information. Therefore, the findings of this study not only support certain previous studies but also contribute to a broader discussion on the need to strengthen dictionary use skills among learners.

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Table 4. Summary Table of Comparative Research Findings

Aspect	Current Study Findings	Previous Studies (Aligned)	Previous Studies (Divergent)
Dictionary proficiency level	High – students understand structure, meaning, and context	Aligned: vocabulary mastery is essential in L2 learning (Nation, 2001)	—
Dictionary usage level	High and consistent in learning	Aligned: enhances learner autonomy (Schmitt, 2000)	Divergent: moderate and inconsistent usage (Scholfield, 1998)
Relationship between proficiency and usage	Balanced and closely related	Aligned: more proficient learners use dictionaries more frequently (Chen, 2025; Nesi, 1999)	—
Specific dictionary skills	Strong (meaning and word arrangement), weaker in symbols and abbreviations	Aligned: requires understanding of lexicographic structures (Scholfield, 1982; Nesi, 1999)	—
Function of dictionaries in learning	Actively used to understand texts and complete tasks	Aligned: supports L2 text comprehension (Laufer & Hill, 2000; Zhang et al., 2026)	—
Type of dictionary used	Preference for bilingual dictionaries	Aligned: more practical and accessible (Laufer & Kimmel, 1997)	Divergent: monolingual dictionaries are more effective (Aboghunaim, 2019)
Effect of bilingual dictionaries	Facilitates understanding of meanings	—	Divergent: may lead to literal misinterpretation (Ard, 1982)
Use of digital dictionaries	Increasing but not yet dominant	Aligned: positive trend in technology use (Knežević et al., 2021; Suriani Sudi et al., 2023)	Divergent: ineffective without proper strategies (Wang et al., 2025)
Factors influencing usage	Proficiency level, dictionary type, and user skills	Generally supported in the literature	Supported: these factors explain differences in findings

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that students demonstrate high levels of both dictionary proficiency and usage, thereby confirming the important role of dictionaries as essential tools in supporting Arabic language learning. In addition, this study reveals a significant relationship between dictionary proficiency and usage. Students with higher levels of proficiency tend to use dictionaries more actively and strategically, which in turn contributes to improved comprehension of learning materials. These findings reinforce the view that dictionary skills constitute an effective component of self-directed learning strategies. However, the study also identifies certain weaknesses in specific areas, particularly in understanding symbols and abbreviations used in dictionaries. This indicates that dictionary proficiency extends beyond basic skills and requires a

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deeper understanding of dictionary structure and lexicographic information. From an implication perspective, this study suggests that teachers should place greater emphasis on systematic dictionary skills training in Arabic language instruction, including exposure to effective usage techniques. In addition, schools are encouraged to expand access to various types of dictionaries, including digital dictionaries, in line with current developments in educational technology. Nevertheless, the use of such technologies should be accompanied by appropriate guidance to ensure optimal utilization. Finally, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the role of dictionaries in Arabic language learning, particularly within the context of STAM students. Future research is recommended to involve larger samples and to further explore dictionary use strategies in greater depth, in order to strengthen findings in this field.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

All participants received a comprehensive explanation regarding the research objectives and procedures, including their right to participate voluntarily. Participants were assured that participation was not mandatory and that they had the right to withdraw at any time during the study without negative consequences. To ensure the confidentiality of identities, all data obtained in this study underwent an anonymization process.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare that there is no conflict of interest related to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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