

# The Pocket Dictionary of Arabic Function Words: Design and Development

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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explain the design and development process of a pocket dictionary of Arabic function words equipped with conceptual equivalents in English and Indonesian. Based on the initial observation, many Arabic language students have difficulty understanding Arabic function words, also known as “*Charf*” or “*al-Adawat an-Nachwiyyah*”. The difficulty may be due to the lack of attention by Arabic teachers in discussing the concepts and functions of these words. This is because function words in Arabic are considered less important than other word categories, such as verbs and nouns. After all, they cannot stand alone without other words. Three initial steps of the ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) research and development model were used to develop the product. The result of the analysis shows that Arabic has many function words which are context dependent. These words are not only classified in the “*Charf*”, but also the “*Fil*” (verbs) and “*Ism*” (nouns). Some Arabic function words fall into more than one category depending on the sentence’s context. Furthermore, the result of the analysis was used to design and develop a pocket dictionary of Arabic function words and their conceptual equivalents in English and Indonesian to make it easier for students to understand the concept of function words and their comparisons in the three languages.

**Keywords:** *Arabic Function Words, Pocket Dictionary, Arabic Lexicography.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In linguistics, the function words (or called “functors”) are words that only have grammatical meaning and do not have lexical meaning, so they cannot stand alone as independent words. The dependence of a function word can be proved from its use which always requires other categories of words that accompany it to clarify its real meaning. Other categories or types of words that can accompany the function word are termed “full word” or “content word”. The full or content word is a word that has a complete and free lexical meaning [1]

According to Kridalaksana (2013) and Norquist (2019), function words mainly express grammatical relationships; they cannot be affixed and do not contain lexical meanings. A couple of word categories, including prepositions, conjunctions, articles, and pronominals, are classified to this function; they are notably contrasted with the full words. [2] also emphasized that the function words only have grammatical meaning and do not have a lexical meaning; the meaning of a function word is not determined by its word independently, but it is determined by its relation to other words in a phrase or

sentence. [3] stated that the function word is a closed class of words or phrases that usually do not change in its form. This word has no (or little) intrinsic meaning and specifically expresses a grammatical function in a sentence, as opposed to a full or lexical word.

Based on what is said by these experts, it can be concluded that function words are words that cannot stand alone like a lexical one because it only has a grammatical meaning. They are also required to be combined with other words in the lexical word category so that the true meaning of this word can be noted. Thus, some experts said that a function word only has a grammatical meaning and does not have a lexical meaning or the basic meaning of the lexeme. However, some other experts argue that a function word still particularly has a potential or basic meaning, but it is not as stable and firm as the meaning contained in the full word (content word or lexical word).

Terminologically, the term “function word” is not well-known in the Arabic language. However, when viewed from the equivalent concept, the function word in Arabic can be equated with the term “*al-Adawat an-*

*Nachwiyyah*". In several other studies, the discussion of function words in Arabic is also often compared to the discussion of "Charf". It can be noticed that because the category of the word "Charf" in Arabic has characteristics that are identical to the function word in general, including (1) they have grammatical meanings (the meaning depends on other words in the phrases or sentences), (2) they are classified into the category of closed-class words, and (3) they cannot occupy the main function in the sentence [4]. Therefore, the discussion of function words in Arabic will not be separated from the discussion of "Charf" in Arabic grammatical thought. However, based on observations in several works of literature, the function words in Arabic are not only limited to the category of "Charf" words, but also certain nouns (*Ism*) and verbs (*Fi'l*).

Numerous studies about function words in Arabic have been carried out by several scholars, including Garancang (2015), who wrote an article about the function words in Arabic which has been published in a journal. According to him, "Churuf al-Ma'ani" concept in Arabic has a conceptual equivalent to the function words in Indonesian. However, Garancang (2015) only discusses the classification of Arabic function words regarding the number of constituent letters and their functions, not yet at the stage of inventorying function words in Arabic itself.

[5] has studied the grammatical construction of function words between old and modern written Arabic. He compared the two corpora of Arabic texts; they are Arabic heritage language (AHL) representing classical Arabic and Arabic news texts (ANT) as a representation of modern standard Arabic. The outcomes show that the frequencies of function words are not equivalent, and this suggests that function words and their relationship with the main part of speech class in a combination language like Arabic have syntactically changed in MSA. However, their constructional changes tend to be ignored in Arabic grammar. However, this study does not discuss specifics regarding the function words in Arabic because it only compares the findings of the two corpora.

[6] has also explored one of the Arabic function words in his work about conjunctive expressions and their types in Arabic grammatical thought. It is known that the conjunctive (or called "al-*athaf*" in Arabic) is one of the function words which serves to connect one word to another (in a sentence). However, this research is limited to discussion about the conjunctive in Arabic, not fully explored the Arabic function words.

Regarding the Arabic function words dictionary composition, [7] has arranged a dictionary entitled "*Qamus al-Adawat an-Nachwiyyah*". This dictionary is a monolingual dictionary presenting entries about task words in Arabic and their functions. It provides a list of function words and includes a discussion of several nouns and verbs that evidently can stand alone (it is not

like any other function words) so that they are too broad and do not focus on task words only. As for grammatical comparisons in multiple languages, has compiled a book entitled "*Multilingual: Arabic – English – Indonesian Grammar; Integration-Interconnection*". In this book, tries to link the elements of locality contained in Indonesian, elements of modernity in English, and elements of religiosity in Arabic. However, there is no specific discussion of the function word in this book. Although it is still mentioned, the discussion regarding it is only limited as a complement to the whole discussion of books on Arabic grammar.

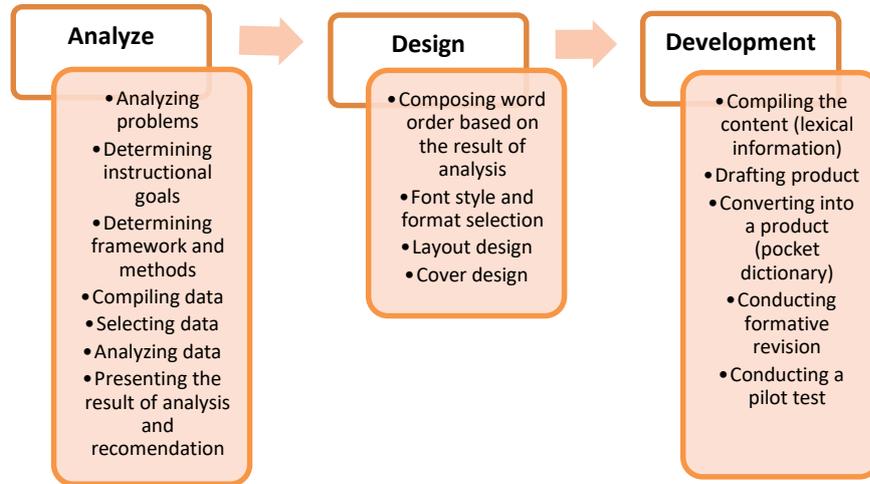
In the context of Arabic learning, the discussion about the function words, which are also known as "Charf" or "*al-Adawat an-Nachwiyyah*", does not mainly get the attention of Arabic teachers and students. It can be noticed from the lack of discussion about it, even though knowing the function word is very important in language learning. According to Chung and Pennebaker (2007), function words only account for about one-tenth of 1% of our vocabulary, but they make up nearly 60% of the words we use every day. This shows that the function word significantly impacts what we express in a daily conversation to our speech partners. At the same time, using the function words can also reflect many things related to our attitude (self-attitude), such as approval, affirmations, denial, and so on.

Based on this exploration, we are interested in designing and developing a product based on research results in the form of a multilingual pocket dictionary of function words in Arabic which is also equipped with conceptual equivalents and their use in English and Indonesian. Using comparison, Arabic learners from Indonesian speakers are expected not only to know and understand the concept and use of the function word in Arabic, but also to be able to understand its concept and use in Indonesian as their native language (mother tongue), as well as to know the equivalent concept in English as an international or global language which is also important and needs to be learned in a global society.

## 2. METHOD

This research is a combination of basic literature study and product development. Therefore, we adopted a research and development (R&D) method using the ADDIE model (Analyze, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation), which was adapted from "The Systematic Design of Instruction" [7] and "Instructional Design: The ADDIE Approach" [8]. This research and development method was chosen because it was considered following the resulting objectives, which is to create and develop an innovative product based on research results. However, considering that this paper focuses on research on function words in Arabic and their design and development into a pocket dictionary of Arabic function words only -not yet at the stage of testing materials and learning media by experts and testing

implementation in real learning, we use the three initial stages of this research model, they are Analyze, Design, and Development. The process can be seen in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Research and development process**

In the first stage (Analyze), research problems and user need for this product are observed. Once known, the next move is to determine the goal and steps that need to be taken to achieve that goal. Therefore, a literature study was conducted to obtain research data by examining various works of literature on Arabic lexicography, the function words in Arabic (*al-Adawat an-Nachwiyyah*), English, and Indonesian. Hence, the materials for this dictionary are Arabic, English, and Indonesian dictionaries, as well as grammar books from these three languages. The purpose of this analysis is to find the lexical information of each entry of the Arabic function words, including the form, structure, and content [9]

In the next stage (Design), the result of analysis regarding the Arabic function words and their lexical information is sorted according to alphabetical order and designed to be a pocket dictionary draft. The selection of page layout and font formats is also conducted at this stage. To complete the design of this dictionary, the cover design is also carried out as a representation of the contents of the dictionary.

In the last stage (Development), the design results are combined and developed into a pocket dictionary of Arabic task words equipped with conceptual equivalents in English and Indonesian. At this stage, a general check is executed regarding product development results, and a pilot test is also performed to find out the usefulness of this product. The steps for compiling this dictionary follow the method from Sunaryo (2001). According to him, several stages can be done in the process of arranging a dictionary, they are 1) determining data sources, 2) setting and selecting data, 3) presenting data and providing definitions, 4) compiling entries, and 5) typing dictionary scripts.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 The Arabic Function Words: The Concept and Its Position in Arabic Grammar

As stated in the Introduction, the term “Function Word” is not a well-known concept in Arabic grammar due to the complexity of the structure and the complicated relationships between the words (Zadeh, 2010; Madi & Al-Khalifa, 2018; Hamid et al., 2020). In addition, Arabic instructors tend to ignore these function words because discussing this type of word does not get an in-depth discussion in Arabic morphological and syntactic studies. Instead, they prefer to discuss the words belonging to lexical words such as nouns (*Isim*) and verbs (*Fi'l*) because they are the most widely discussed types of words in various grammar books.

Nonetheless, when seen from the equivalent concept, the function word in Arabic can be compared with the term "*al-Adawat an-Nachwiyyah*" (Al-Zohairy, 2015). Furthermore, in several other studies, the discussion of function words in Arabic is also often compared to the discussion of "*Charf*" in the Arabic grammatical thought (Garancang, 2015; Al-Zohairy, 2015; Husni and Zaher, 2020), because the category of the word "*Charf*" in Arabic has characteristics that are identical to the function word in general, including (1) they have grammatical meanings (the meaning depends on other words in the phrases or sentences), (2) they are classified into the category of closed-class words, and (3) they cannot occupy the main function in the sentence (Garancang, 2015).

Sometimes, a word in Arabic can have a full meaning (as a lexical or full word) like a noun or verb, but in a different context, the word can also be a function word that cannot stand alone as a full word. On the other hand, a function word in Arabic can even have more than one

grammatical function depending on the context of the sentence. Consider the following example:

**Table 1. An example of Arabic grammatical function**

	) ماMa(	
<b>Function</b>	Question word ( <i>ism istifham</i> )	Negative particle ( <i>harf nafi</i> )
<b>Sentence</b>	ما اسمك يا أخي؟	ما رأيت أحمد اليوم
<b>Meaning</b>	What is your name, my brother?	I didn't see Ahmad today

From this example, it can be noticed that a function word in Arabic sometimes can have various functions depending on the context of the sentence. Therefore, to find out these various functions in Arabic, it is necessary to discover the potential meanings of these words and understand the context of the sentence.

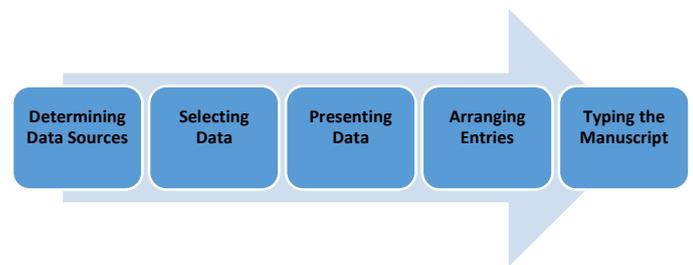
Based on the results of the observation from various Arabic dictionaries and grammar books, it was found that there are 25 various functions of the Arabic function words, they are: 1) *Adawat al-Istifham* (Question Words), 2) *Adawat al-Istitsna`* (Exceptive Particles), 3) *Adawat asy-Syarth* (Conditional Conjunctions), 4) *Adawat an-Nafi* (Negative Particles), 5) *Adawat an-Nahi* (Prohibitive Particles), 6) *Adawat/ Churuf al-Jarr* (Prepositions), 7) *Adawat/ Churuf al-'Athaf* (Conjunctions), 8) *Adawat an-Nashbi/ An-Nawashib* (Subjunctive Particles), 9) *Adawat al-Jazmi/ al-Jawazim* (Jussive Particles), 10) *Adawat an-Nida`* (Vocatives), 11) *Adawat al-Mashdariyyah* (Nominalization), 12) *Adawat azh-Zharfiyyah* (Adverb of Times/Places), 13) *Adawat at-Taukid* (Particles of Emphasis), 14) *Adawat al-Qasam* (Oath Particles), 15) *Adawat al-Ibtida`iyyah*, 16) *Adawat al-Istiqbal* (Future Markers), 17) *Adawat at-Taqlil wa at-Taksir*, 18) *Adawat at-Tarajji/ ar-Raja`*, 19) *Adawat at-Tamanni*, 20) *Adawat al-'Ar dh/ at-Tachdhidh*, 21) *Adawat at-Tandim/ at-Taubikh*, 22) *Adawat at-Ta'ajjub* (Interjections), 23) *Adawat at-Tanbih*, 24) *Adawat at-Taqrir*, and 25) *Adawat al-Jawab* (Responses). These functions are representations of the grammatical meaning of the Arabic function words produced when they are used in sentences (based on the context of the sentences).

**3.2 Design and Development Process**

According to Sunaryo (2001), generally, there are several steps of arranging a dictionary, they are 1) determining data sources, 2) setting and selecting data, 3) presenting data and providing definition (information), 4) compiling entries, and 5) typing dictionary scripts - usually in alphabetical order. Based on these steps, this

Arabic function words dictionary goes through the following processes:

- 1) Selecting representative Arabic grammar dictionaries and books as data entry sources
- 2) Listing all the function words in Arabic found in the sources, including their lexical information
- 3) Finding the use and conceptual equivalence of the Arabic function words in English and Indonesian by utilizing various grammar books from both languages
- 4) Providing a description and example of each function word that has been listed (Arabic - English - Indonesian)
- 5) Arrange entries of all selected Arabic function words, sort them in alphabetical order followed by their equivalents in English and Indonesian



**Figure 2. Stages of Dictionary Design and Development according to Sunaryo (2001)**

**3.3 Specifications of the Pocket Dictionary of the Arabic Function Words**

This dictionary is intended for middle-class Arabic learners who want to know and learn the various functions of Arabic function words. As stated in the introduction, this category of words is not exceedingly popular and rarely discussed by Arabic instructors in their classes, either because it does not have a large portion in the discussion of grammar or is difficult to be learned due to the complexity of their meaning. Therefore, this dictionary is made as simple as possible

so that Arabic learners not only know the existence of the Arabic function words but also understand their functions in sentences.

This Arabic function words dictionary is designed and developed as a pocket dictionary with A6 paper size (105x148 mm). The number of pages ranges from 150-200 pages. In the matter of content, this dictionary consists of 4 parts, they are (1) cover, (2) introduction, (3) content, and (4) glossary. The following is an explanation of each of these parts:

3.3.1 Cover

Cover design is the most important thing in the world of books, it includes photography, verbal words, and colorful text in each book cover, creating meaning that is contained in a cultural sense but still intends to increase attention and sales (Thalia & Franzia, 2018). The main purpose of the cover of a book or dictionary is to invite the reader to read, buy, and provoke those who see to pick up the book and are interested in knowing its contents.



Figure 3. The design of the front and back cover

3.3.2. Introduction

This introductory section consists of a front-page containing information about dictionary specifications, preface, remarks from the Head of the Department of Arabic Literature, Faculty of Letters, State University of Malang -as the research team's institution, table of contents, and instructions for using the dictionary.

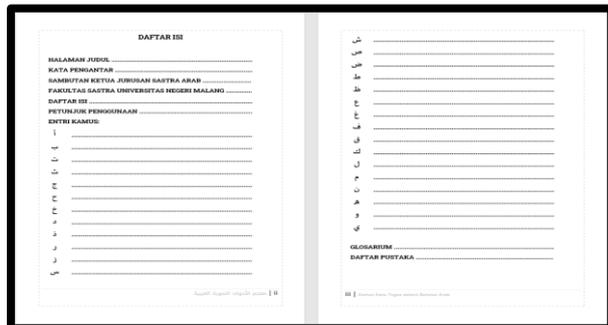


Figure 4. Table of contents

3.3.3 Content

In this section, several things are mainly presented, including word entries, grammatical-potential meanings (*al-ma'ani al-muchtamilah*), grammatical functions (*al-wazha'if an-nachwiyyah*), explanation of each function in Arabic, as well as the conceptual equivalents and their use in English and Indonesian.



Figure 5. An example of dictionary content

3.3.4 Glossary

In this section, definitions of some of the Arabic grammatical terms found in the dictionary are presented. It aims to make it easier for readers to understand the terms that are difficult or even rarely found. Although this dictionary has explained each entry in the content section, the explanation is only limited to its function and use in sentences.

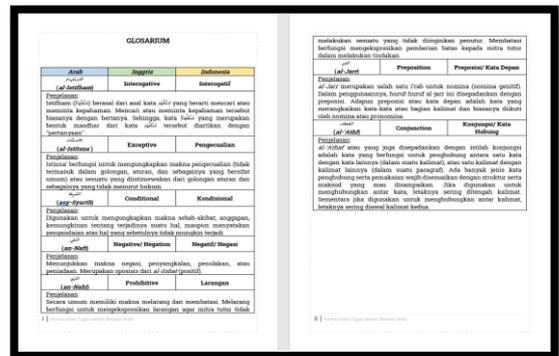


Figure 6. Glossary of grammatical terms and their explanations

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the discussion, it can be concluded that the preparation of this dictionary has undergone a design and development process by involving preliminary research related to the function words in Arabic. The result of this research is then designed and developed into a pocket dictionary of Arabic function words equipped with their conceptual equivalents in English and Indonesian to make it easier

for students to understand the concept of function words and their comparisons in the three languages. It is hoped that this pocket dictionary can be used by learners and instructors so that it can support their Arabic learning, especially in understanding Arabic function words and their translation.

The limitation of this research and development is that this product has not been validated by experts and has not been used in real Arabic learning. In consequence, this research and development activity needs to be followed up with a feasibility test concerning the design and material. It is also necessary to experiment with its use in the Arabic learning process so that the strengths and weaknesses of this product can be known.

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